

He Who Knows Himself Knows His Lord

man ʿaraf nafsahu ʿaraf rabbahu

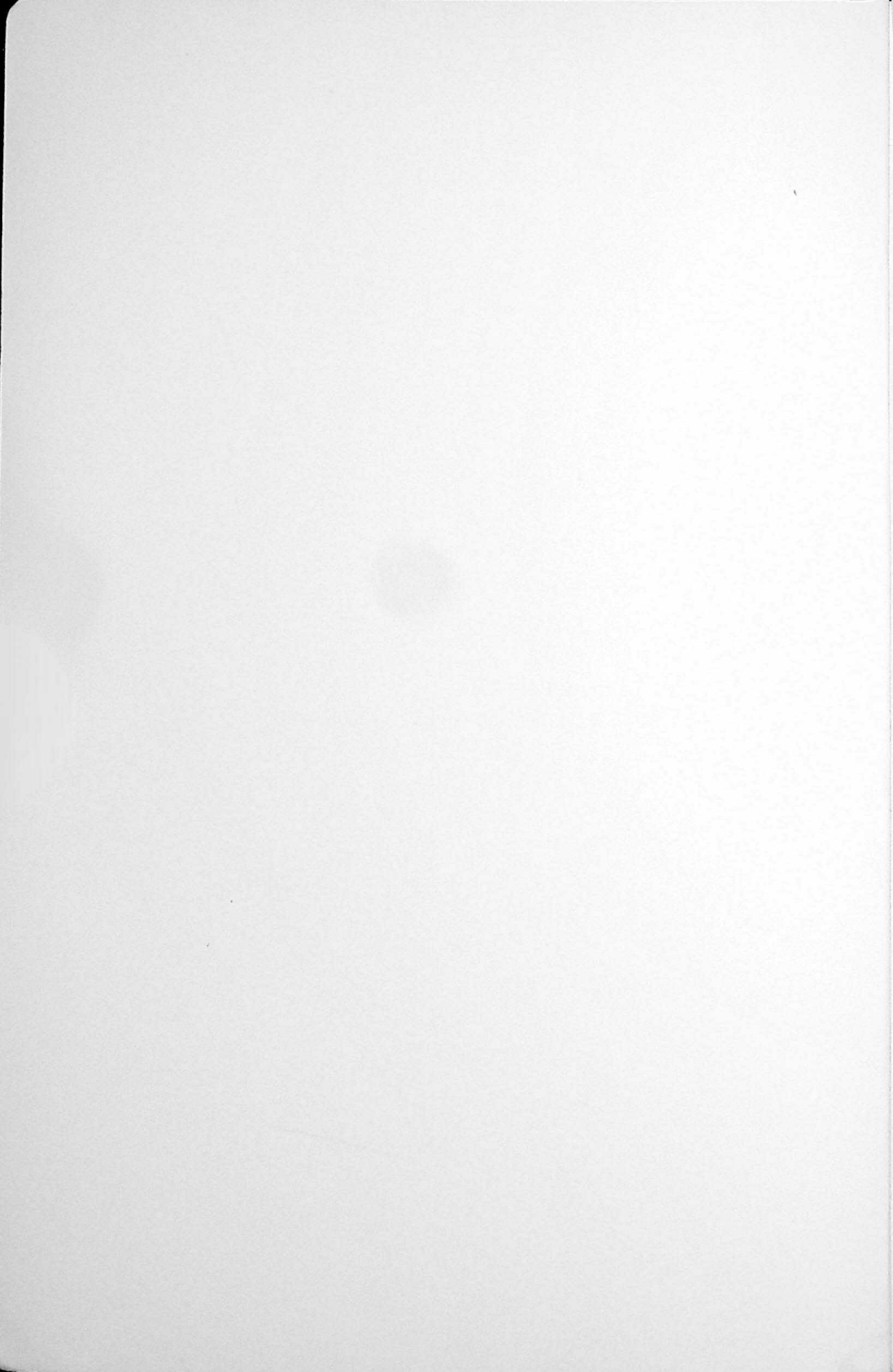


Shaykh Muhammad Safiid al-Jamal ar-Rifafii ash-Shadhdhuliyyah

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ

عَرَفَ

رَبَّهُ



He Who Knows Himself Knows His Lord

man 'araf nafsahu 'araf rabbahu

Presented by the Possessor of Divine Favor
ṣāhib al-faḍilah

Shaykh Muḥammad Sa'id al-Jamal
Al-Rifā'i ash-Shadhuliyyah of Quds

May Allah bless him and sanctify his secret!



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

bismi-llāhi-r-raḥmani-r-raḥīm

In the name of Allāh, the Merciful, the Compassionate

revised printing 2009

Cover art by Huda al-Jamal

Photo from the window of a building in the village of Lifta, just outside
Jerusalem, destroyed in 1948.



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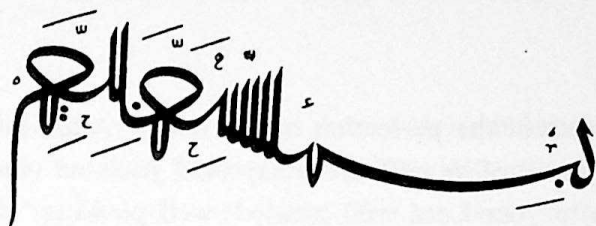
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Bismi-llāhi-r-raḥmāni-r-raḥīm

In the name of Allah, the Universally Merciful,
the Singularly Compassionate

I am Travelling to my Lord

Praise belongs to Allah Who sent down the secrets of His essence (*adh-dhāt*); with His power He ascribed the spirit to the body enabling [the spirit] to manifest its particular qualities of the names. The spirit (*rūḥ*) was then hidden in the dark psychological layers of the [individualized] self (*al-naḥsānāyyah*). These veils caused the self to forget its [originally ascribed] perfection and it began to incline toward lower desires and to indulge in appetites and to become used to particular habits [or patterns of behavior], until the individual self no longer remembered its origin nor thought about the [originally ascribed] lofty principals. Then Allah sent messengers and they had the same image, but at the same time, they manifested His Hidden Image.

Within this body that was formed by layers of darkness, Allah lit the lamp of His domain in (*al-malakūt*) so that [the spirit] (*rūḥ*) could witness how it deviates from [its original perfect nature] and realize that it has the potential for perfection and the possibility of attaining a lofty ranks. With this realization, the spirit begins to strive and to exert its utmost effort, asking the Originator (*al-mubdiʿ*) to remove the dark veils, as well as the luminous ones, [so that only the Original Essence remained]. It is in this way that the Originator comes closer to [the spirit] as the spirit (*rūḥ*) approaches Him, and He enraptures the spirit making him forget old patterns [of behaviors] and [unhealthy] habits. As the spirit arrives at the Singular Presence, the Presence of Oneness (*al-hadrat al-aḥadiyyah*), its qualities are consumed in His qualities and no trace remains fighting

Lordship because of the perfection of servitude.¹ Allah then addresses [the spirit] by some of its names. He says, “O you soul whose self is at peace! Return to your Lord well pleased, well pleasing.” [Q89:27-28]. And He orders [the spirit] to enter among His worshippers to actualize vicegerency (*khalifah*). In this way, the self becomes dressed in the garments of eternal perfection and full wakefulness (*al-kamūlat al-abadiyyah*).

May the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon the Master of humanity, the Lamp in the darkness and the Best of all creatures, and may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon his family and companions, who gain the blessing of accompanying him by their best qualities which enable them to arrive at the station of the Pole (maqām al-quṭbiyyah).

Know, my beloved, that walking in the way of the Truth is the way of establishing the character traits of the prophets (*akḥālaq al-nabayā*), the Messengers, and the elite among the pious people. Allah describes these people: He says, “Truly you (ʿIblīs) have no power over My worshippers.” [Q15:42]. This potential achievement belongs to those for whom Allah has made the way available – the family of those chosen for purity and the possessors of full readiness for perfection (*kamala*) and for untainted natural characteristics (*al-ṭabāʿi al-salima*). They have no desire for the pleasures of this world (*dunyā*) or the next (*ʿākḥira*). Their hearts are completely directed toward their Owner (*al-malikahum*) and they find no rest, but in remembering Him; their only sustenance is reciting His name, morning and evening. They long for the sunset [of their egoistic selves] as birds yearn to build their nests because they are always in the world of seeking forgiveness and remembrance (*dhikr*) – early in the morning or late at night. When the night settles and darkness

¹ See *Servanthood* (ʿubūdiyya) pages 24-27. Sidi Shaykh Muḥammad Saʿid al-Jamal ar-Rifaʿi ash-Shadhuli. *The Path to Allah, Most High*. revised edition 2007.

intensifies and every lover is finally alone with his beloved, they stand on their toes ready for their Beloved Allah. They talk intimately with Him, thanking Him for His gifts and favors. You see some of them calling for Him, weeping, begging, invoking, moaning, standing or bowing or prostrating. This is a characteristic of walking the way to the Truth; they sell the pleasures of the senses for the manifestation of hidden insights.

The walking is difficult for one who descends to a prison, and to the lowest of the low, indulging in animal behavior and becoming imprisoned by habitual [wrong] action. These people are caught in a net of disagreeable behavior, and the Light that Allah threw on His people when He created the creation in the darkness, has not touched them. This is expressed in the noble Ḥadīth as-Ṣharīf, “Allah created people in darkness, but then threw upon them His Light. So whomever was touched by that Light is guided and whomever was not touched by that Light became confused and strayed and remained in that state and was not guided to the safe shore (*al-aminah*).”

Know that the levels of this way are well known to its family. The traveller on the path (*as-sālik*) must walk through these levels, one after the other, until he arrives at the end. At the end, the walking rests, but the epiphanies (*at-tajallīyat*)² do not cease because the [Divine] revelation is endless. This is what the People of Allah mean when they say, “The ascending never stops, even after death.” The state of the *sālik* is like that of the traveller who passes by stations on his way [to Allah]. Just as the traveller needs a guide who knows the way, provision for the way, a vehicle in which to travel, and a companion, the traveller on the path needs the guide who knows the way – its goodness and danger. His provision is consciousness of Allah and guarding his self from evil (*taqwā*); the vehicle in which he travels is ardent effort (*al-himmah*), and he needs companions that become his brethren who pursue the same way.

² Translated as theophany. Sidi Shaykh Muḥammad Saʿid al-Jamal ar-Rifaʿi ash-Shadhuli. *How the Arrival is Realized O People of Hearts and Souls and Intellects*. 2004.

The voyager (*sālik*) also needs weapons that protect him from enemies – the *shayṭān* and his *nafs*. These weapons are the Godly names. And just as a traveller passes through countries and cities, visiting and then leaving them to continue toward his final destination, the traveller on the path (*as-sālik*) passes by the stations that are well known to the People of Allah.

There are seven of these stations. The first station is the station of dark inclinations where the soul (*an-nafs*) is called the self that commands (*an-nafs al-ammārah*); the second station is the station of the lights where the soul is called the self that blames (*an-nafs al-lawwāmah*); the third station is the station of the secrets where the soul is called the inspired self (*an-nafs al-mulḥammah*); the fourth station is the station of completion and perfection (*maqām al-kamāl*) where the soul is called the tranquil, secure self (*an-nafs al-muṭmaʿinnah*); the fifth station is the station of connection (*taʿalluq*) or reunion and communion (*maqām al-wiṣāl*) where the soul is called the contented and pleasing self (*an-nafs ar-rāḍiyah*); the sixth station is the station of the epiphanies (*tajalī*) of [Divine] action where the soul is called the pleased self (*an-nafs al-marḍiyyah*); the seventh station is the station of the epiphanies of the names and the qualities where the soul is called the perfect self (*an-nafs al-kāmilah*).

When a person arrives in one of these stations, the station which is higher is still veiled to him. So whoever is in the first station is veiled and cannot witness the lights (*al-ānwār*), and whoever is in the second station is veiled by the lights and cannot witness the secrets (*al-asrār*), and whoever is in the third station is veiled by the secrets and cannot witness the perfection (*al-kamāl*), and whoever is in the fourth station is veiled by the perfection and does not have the spiritual state of communion with the contingent³ essence (*wiṣāl*), and whoever is in the fifth station, the

³ Contingency means that a thing is incidental to something else or dependent for its existence or occurrence on something else; happening by chance or without known cause; accidental.

communion (*al-wiṣāl*) veils him from the epiphanies of actions (*tajalīyyatu-l-ʿafʿāl*), and whoever is in the sixth station is veiled by the epiphanies of the actions from the epiphanies of the names and the qualities (*tajalīyyatu-l-ʿasmā wa-ṣ-ṣifāt*), and whoever is in the seventh station is veiled by the epiphanies of the names and the qualities from the epiphanies of the Essence (*tajalī adh-dhāt*).

Know that the epiphany of the Essence is prevented because of its blinding effect in a way similar to being blinded by the sun when you look directly at it. This is why it is said that the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) does not reveal His Essence (*adh-dhāt*) to His existing creatures in epiphanies except from beyond the veil of the names. So the highest station (*maqām*) [of arrival] is the epiphany of the names and the qualities. Regarding the epiphany of the Essence: It is impossible for the people of Allah who remember Him, but who do not fully comprehend His Essence. In the following chapters of this book, the epiphany of the actions, the names and the qualities will be explained to you in detail, if Allah so wills.

Know that it is narrated in the authentic noble Ḥadīth as-Ṣarīf that there are seventy thousand dark and luminous veils between the worshipping slave and His Lord. The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) said, “Allah has seventy thousand dark and luminous veils; were He to remove them, the glories of His face would burn away everything perceived by the sight of His creatures.” However, being veiled is a characteristic of the slave and not of Allah, for Allah cannot be veiled. If He willed He would have had someone who could suppress Him, but on the contrary, He is the Irresistible [or Overpowering] (*al-qāhir*) and the Suppressor [or Overwhelming] (*al-qahhār*) far above His creation. So the one who is veiled⁴ is, in fact, the slave.

⁴ See *The Veil* pages 135-7. Sidi Ṣaykh Muḥammad Saʿid al-Jamal ar-Rifaʿi ash-Shadhuli. *The Path to Allah, Most High*. revised edition 2007.

This is the meaning of veiling to the People of Authentic Realization, so understand because it is very subtle and precisely accurate. Do not think of the veils as the indulgence of appetite and do not think that being away from Allah is being away in distance, as the people of literal and short understanding think. This is because Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) is far beyond physical nearness and distance, and He is beyond time and space, and beyond all the characteristics of temporary existence.

Travelling in the way is the removal of the seventy thousand veils and is accomplished by walking through the seven mentioned stations. In each station the self is veiled by ten thousand veils. The first veil is denser than the second veil and the second veil is denser than the third, and this density continues decreasing until the ten thousandth veil. Also, the veils of each self (*nafs*), in a particular station, are denser than the veils of the self in a higher station. Whenever the traveller reaches one of the stations, he claims that he has arrived at the Presence of Allah, but as you now understand, if he, for example, is in the first station, he is far from Allah because his *nafs* command him to evil. I will later mention the characteristic of the commanding *nafs*, and the characteristics of the *nafs* in other levels, so that the traveller can know which station he is in because there are known characteristics for each level of the *nafs*. Each *nafs* has its world, its state, and its station and must walk in a particular way. The *nafs* of the commanding self is veiled by dark veils, but in other stations the *nafs* is veiled by luminous veils. Some of these veils are more subtle than others. Therefore if the traveller in the first station is taught the first name that he must invoke, and he continues to invoke this name, in the early morning and late night, loudly and quietly, publicly and secretly, standing, and sitting, Allah will light a kingly lamp within his inner being from the blessing of that name. So he begins to see the ugly qualities, which have become his habit, and he begins to hate these ugly habits and to regret what he has missed and the time that has passed while he was heedless and unmindful of what is ugly and what is beautiful, except by mere words [and claims]. So he enthusiastically strives to rid himself of

these ugly habits, even if they are adultery and alcoholism. And he strives to rid himself of the inner evils, such as arrogance, envy, and malice. The more the worshipping slave increases his invocation and remembrance, the more he hates his offensive actions, and his effort to rid himself of these ugly habits becomes extreme. Such matter is realized by those who pursue the way, but those who have not experienced it deny it.

This is the first favor Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) honors the traveller with in order to help him walk the path. There are gifts in each station (*maqām*), in fact, many gifts characterize the Compassionate opening. As the traveller continues to remember and to strive, his nearness to his Lord strengthens until he reaches the lofty degrees of perfection.

It is common for some to become lazy, and their negligence prevents them from ascending to lofty degrees. These people do not become conscious beyond their physical senses. Today the cornerstones of the path – of the people who have realized [the Truth] (*al-muḥaqqiqin*) – have been destroyed and their traces are disappearing, its family has died and nothing remains of the road but its name. This is why I am writing this message, in which I explain how to travel [the road to Allah], and I describe the states of those who are travelling the road and explain how to navigate its levels. I will explain what the traveller needs to arrive at the realization [of the Truth]. This ends all the excuses made by the lazy ones who seek to not abide by the Law of Allah (*sharīʿah*) and the way of His Prophet (*sunnah ar-rasūl*). These people stop with illusion, pictures and imagination. On the other hand, those who follow the Commands of Allah and His Messenger become enthusiastic because they desire to arrive at the Lord of the Worlds (*rabbi-l-ʿālamīn*).

O dear traveller on the path (sālik), this is why I will show you how to travel [the road to Allah] and walk to your Lord and Protector Who created you, fashioned you, straightened you and modified you. He has fashioned you in the image He wills, so understand. I will explain how to walk and how to not go astray. In the following chapters, one after the

other, I will show you how to begin and how to walk the levels according to the following order:

The first subject concerns the lower world (*ad-dunyā*) and its pleasures and an explanation of its reality.

The second subject encourages walking on this path and explains its benefit, and mentions the praiseworthy qualities that lead to perfection (*kamāl*).

The third subject explains the veils between the slave (*al-ʿabd*) and his Lord (*al-rabb*), and explains what the slave needs in order to tear them apart and remove them from his subtle humanity – this includes an explanation of repentance (*at-tawbah*) and how to rid one's self of selfishness, as well as how to consider [reality] apart from causes [and effects], etc.

The fourth subject explains the commanding self (*an-nafs al-ammārah*), its walking, its world, its location, its state and what it perceives. It also explains its qualities and ugliness and how to get rid of this and how to ascend from its station to the next one where the *nafs* become reproachful (*an-nafs al-lawwāmah*).

The fifth subject explains the reproachful self (*an-nafs al-lawwāmah*) and its beautiful and ugly qualities.

The sixth subject explains the inspired self (*an-nafs al-mulḥammah*); how it gathers good and evil with the beautiful qualities, but is nonetheless the loci of danger.

The seventh subject explains the tranquil, secure self (*an-nafs al-muṭmaʿinnah*) and its perfection (*al-kamāl*) compared to the lower levels.

The eighth subject explains the satisfied self (*an-nafs ar-rāḍiyah*) and its beautiful qualities.

The ninth subject explains the pleased self (*an-nafs al-marḍiyyah*) and its marvelous qualities.

The tenth subject explains the perfect self (*an-nafs al-kāmilah*), its nearness and boundless servitude.

The eleventh subject explains the [spiritually mature] guide (*al-murshid*), his qualities and states so that the characteristics of the one who is fit to guide are made known and the one who is not fit to guide is exposed. It also explains the qualities of a seeker (*al-murīd*) who is able to travel and the qualities of one who is not capable of travelling. It also explains Iblis (*ash-shayṭān*) and all the types of his manifestation and his appearance to the people in each station (*maqām*) with what suits them; his cunning plots seek to confuse them and lead them astray.

But before I begin I would like to explain some definitions and terms used by the people of realization:

Ṣūfī: Becoming a Ṣūfī and following Sufism (*at-taṣawwuf*) is to stand firm in the laws of polite manners (*al-adab ash-sharīʿah*), outwardly and inwardly. The state of the travelling slave – what he says and what he does should be the same. He must abide by the Divine Law (*ash-sharīʿah al-ilāhiyyah*), by all of its commands, and he must avoid all of its prohibitions in everything he says and does. His state must be observant of each breath and movement he makes and he must abide by Allah's moral ethics (*akhlāq*) and by the moral ethics and character traits (*akhlāq*) of His Messenger in everything he does. He must follow the actions of the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) and act according to the Messenger's way. If he does not do this himself and tries to make others not follow then he is called a person in a hopeless state of infidelity (*zindīq*) and a transgressor. May Allah give us refuge [from him and from this state]. The realization (*taḥaqquq*) and the arrival (*wuṣūl*) on the path (*aṭ-ṭarīq*) cannot take place until you understand the Messenger, and the heirs of the praiseworthy qualities (*al-wārithu-l-muḥammadī*), and you understand the Laws (*ash-sharīʿah*) and the Truth (*ḥaqīqah*). Anyone who claims that he is a purified one (*mutaṣawwifah*), but does not abide by the Law is, in fact, corrupt (*fasīq*).

At-Taṣawwuf: The science of purification (*at-taṣawwuf*) is the science of the knowledge of the righteousness of the heart and of how to clean the self's blameworthy character traits, such as, envy, jealousy, deception, arrogance, *etc.* Sufism means to abide by the [Godly] commands and to avoid the [Godly] prohibitions.

Aṣḥ-Ṣḥarī'ah: Know that the Law (*aṣḥ-ṣḥarī'ah*) is the manifestation of the Reality (*al-ḥaqīqah*) and the Reality is the inner truth of the Law. They accompany each other and abide by each other. Neither is fulfilled except by the other; each law that does not approve of Reality is unacceptable, just as every truth that does not approve of the Law is refuted and its possessor is rejected. The one who has no Reality has no Law, and the one who has no Law has no Reality. Truth is to witness Lordship within all creatures, seeing the creation through the Real (*al-ḥaqq*), which means to live in accordance to this Reality. So one can see Allah in his worship by being actualized in the station of excellence (*maqām al-ʿiḥsān*) as is expressed in the saying of the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*), "Excellence (*al-ʿiḥsān*) is to worship Allah as if you are seeing Him."

The Law (*aṣḥ-ṣḥarī'ah*) is knowing how to walk toward Allah (*subḥānahū wa-tā ʿālā*) and to always look toward Allah (*subḥānahū wa-tā ʿālā*) through the Truth (*al-ḥaqīqah*). The way (*aṭ-ṭarīq*) is travelling the road of the Law which means acting in accordance to it because it is the loci of the [Divine] sight. It is in this way that spiritual medicine (*al-ṭibb ar-ruḥy*) works because it is the science of the heart's language, disease, and pain. It is also the science of the heart's cure and the maintenance of the heart's health and balance.

Al-Ṭibb ar-Ruḥy: Know that to the people of Sufism, spiritual medicine (*al-ṭibb ar-ruḥy*) involves knowledge of the actions and agitations by which the spiritual heart (*al-qalb ar-ruḥānniy*) reserves

health and balance. This can only be practiced by one who possesses the knowledge of what returns health and balance to the spiritual heart. The self (*an-nafs*) struggles because of its loss of balance and it gains satisfaction with the restoration of this balance.

Aṭ-Ṭabīb al-Arwah: Also know that the physician of the spirit (*aṭ-ṭabīb al-arwah*) is the person who has attained knowledge of the Law (*aṣḥ-ṣḥarīʿah*), knowledge of the way (*aṭ-ṭarīq*), and knowledge of the truth (*al-ḥaqīqah*). He must attain knowledge to an extent that enables him to treat the diseases within the souls (*nafs*) of the seekers who seek to arrive to Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*). He should be capable of lifting the ruling of the contingency [of events] and the traits of [the physical] nature that cause human disease and cause the forgetfulness and heedlessness of the Protector, the Lord of the Worlds, the Real (*al-ḥaqq*). These physical traits and [events] in the world of contingency also take the traveller away from the true moral ethics and character traits (*akhlāq*) of the human being and toward the unworthy character traits, which are not in harmony and conformity with the secret of existence, the spiritual spirit, and the Singular heart. Instead, they lead the human being toward the inclination of the animal desires of the lower self until they prevent the slave from [being conscious of] Reality, and from [knowledge of] the self's origin, and from the way that leads to arrival at real perfection (*kamāl*).

Al-ʿĀrif: The spiritual physician is the gnostic (*al-ʿārif*) *shaykh* who knows the One Able to perfect, guide and lead toward spiritual maturity (*ʿirshād*). Know that the Guide who is the master of wayfaring on the path (*sulūk*) is the one who has attained knowledge of the [spiritual] sciences. He is the one who is guided and so he can guide others to spiritual maturity. He helps, whoever seeks his help, to attain the levels of the righteous people (*aṣ-ṣāliḥin*). He does so by Allah's favor upon him; he has direct knowledge from the Lord of spiritual medicine. He is the healer and the physician of the spirit by knowledge of the cures which Allah has

taught him. He is one who has attained, by his piercing insight, the station of witnessing – witnessing the diseases that cross the hearts of the travellers preventing them from proximity to the Presence of the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*). He also sees the cures that heal these diseases, like spiritual practices and resistive methods. By the Power of the Hidden, he clears the lower world's rust and removes its love from the heart of the seeker until nothing remains of its pollution, taste, deception and blemish.

Al-Murāqaba: Know, my beloved, that internal vigilant watching (*al-murāqaba*) means that the slave has firm knowledge that the Lord is watching him in all of his states. His sojourn continues to Allah until he relinquishes his blameworthy qualities to remain in the praiseworthy qualities. He looks by the heart to Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*), observing and visualizing the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) in everything, so that when the self is about to commit a disobedience, he finds the Real watching, feels ashamed, and turns back. If you observe Him while you are eating you will find that He is the One Who brought the food to you without any power and strength from you, and He is also the One Who moves your hand to pick up the food you are eating. He is the One who gave you the ability to raise the food to your mouth and He is also the One Who moves your mouth and makes your saliva flow. He is also the One Who created in you the power to enjoy [food]; then He is the One Who leads the food to your stomach, and gives your body energy and order. He is the One Who disciplines you. So learn that there is no actual Doer save Him. If this meaning becomes strong within you, it will clarify your actions and unify the Essence (*adh-dhāt*), and when the mastery of watching (*al-murāqaba*) increases you will see that He is the Eternal for His slave without action! This is the meaning of witnessing (*mushāhadah*) everything, but this is a tasting matter (*dhawq*) and the mind cannot grasp it, and none knows it, except the family of attentive care and the purified ones.

*Unveiling (mukāshafa) and Witnessing (mushāhadah):*⁵ Know that unveiling (*mukāshafa*) is the presence of the heart with Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) and that witnessing (*mushāhadah*) is the presence with the Witnessed. Witnessing is a consciousness in which the outer and inner senses unite, and that which demands this unity is a Light from the Mighty Witnessed that erases the darkness of the ego-self's veils and substitutes them so that the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) is seen by His own Light and all otherness annihilates by His manifestation. Nonetheless, witnessing is of many levels, such as witnessing the levels [themselves] and witnessing the intermediaries, which is the station of the intermediary between the seeker and the Ultimate End (*al-muntaha*). This is because to the seeker in the beginning of the matter, the Real reveals Himself in the epiphany of a live manifestation. But beyond that [level] there is the witnessing of the end ones (*al-muntahiyyin*), which is the highest station of witnessing. It is seeing the unity in the manifestation, so that the gnostic sees everything and is not veiled from seeing the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) by seeing the creation; and although he is fully consumed in Him, he is not veiled from seeing the creation by seeing the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*).

Witnessing the manifestation in the unity means witnessing the perfection of the holy essence of the One and the Only (*al-wāḥid al-āḥad*). It is His manifestation to His Self with all the considerations of His Singularity and what it demands, and with all the characteristics included in the eyes of His unity, such as, the Image of the Single Being manifesting eternally in the details of the levels of existence.

⁵ See *The Witnessing* pages 128-130. Sidi Shaykh Muḥammad Saʿid al-Jamal ar-Rifaʿi ash-Shadhuli. *The Path to Allah, Most High*. revised edition 2007.

*At-Tajallī:*⁶ Know that from the perspective of the slave (*al-ʿabd*), the Divine epiphany (*at-tajallī*) is the removal of human veils and the polishing of the rust of the natural character traits of humanity from the heart's mirror. Know that for the elite of the creatures there is continuous epiphany from Allah to their hearts and so they worship Allah as if they are seeing Him. The *ḥadīth*, "Indeed when Allah reveals Himself in an epiphany to a thing, this thing is humbled to Him," is expressed in His saying, "When Allah revealed Himself in epiphany to the mountain, He made it come to dust and Mūsā fell thunderstruck."

Know that the first epiphany was the manifestation of the Essence (*adh-dhāt*) to His Self in the first seeing without any of the qualities. Nonetheless, many of the loyal Friends of Allah (*al-awliyā'*) deny this, and say that the first epiphany (*at-tajallī*) would not have happened except through the manifestation of one of the qualities. So the [first] epiphany (*at-tajallī*) becomes an epiphany of the names (*asmā'*) which is in close proximity to the epiphany of the qualities (*ṣifāt*), but its beginning is one of the qualities as it becomes designated (*ta'yīn*) and differentiated (*tafṣīl*) from the Essence (*adh-dhāt*).

Regarding the epiphany of the qualities, it is referred to as the epiphany of the qualities, but its beginning is an action (*afʿāl*) of His Actions, and can therefore be called the manifestation of Actions.

The epiphany of the names is what is revealed to the heart of the traveller. If Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) reveals Himself to the traveller in an epiphany by a name of His names, the seeker becomes absent and is annihilated under the Lights of that name to the degree that when the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) is called by that name, the traveller answers!

⁶ *at-tajallī* – revelation, divine disclosure or epiphany; translated as manifesting Himself in theophany or Divine theophany or manifestation: Sidi Shaykh Muḥammad Saʿid al-Jamal ar-Rifaʿi ash-Shadhuli. ***How the Arrival is Realized O People of Hearts and Souls and Intellects***. 2004.

Regarding the epiphany of the qualities, this is the revelation of the qualities of the names to the heart of the traveller. If Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) reveals Himself in an epiphany to the traveller by a particular quality of His qualities, knowing that the qualities of the traveller are annihilated, some of the traces of this particular quality will manifest through the traveller by the favor of Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*). For example, if Allah reveals Himself upon the traveller by the quality of the All-Hearing (*as-Samīʿ*), the traveller can hear even the speech of solid objects and the speech of other creatures. It is in this way that the traces of the other qualities also manifest upon the traveller.

Regarding the epiphany of the actions (*al-aʿāl*), this is what is revealed to the heart of the traveller concerning Allah's actions. If the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) reveals Himself upon the traveller by His actions, the flow of Allah's Power within the creatures will be revealed to the traveller so he can see that Allah is the Mover and the One Who brings the creature to a halt. The traveller will be able to witness this live [action] and none know this except the family who are worthy of it. The loci of this epiphany is the possessor of the Truthful Feet (*al-ḥab al-aqdam*) among the chosen people of the path [the elite among the special]. This is a dangerous epiphany because it completely negates the belonging of the actions to the slave. But, "Allah makes those who believe firm by the consistent Word."

Know that the epiphany of actions precedes the epiphany of qualities and so if the traveller is firm and does not cross the legal limits he can move forward from this dangerous epiphany to the epiphany of the names and the qualities. But if he does not become firm [in holding onto the Law] he will become one who does not follow and one who also tries to make others not follow (*zindīq*), and he will leave the path and descend to the lowest of the low. There is no power or strength except by Allah, the Most High (*al-ʿalīyy*), the Tremendous (*al-ʿaẓīm*).

Ash-Shawq (yearning or longing): Know, my beloved, that longing (*ash-shawq*) is the need of the heart to meet the Beloved. Love is a natural inclination toward something because it is pleasurable. But the love of the travellers to Allah is the inclination of their hearts to the Beauty of the Godly Presence. The longing which they experience overwhelms love by an extreme inclination to join the one who is longing with the One Whom he longs for. It seeks to unite the one who is consumed by love with the One Who consumed him with love (*al-'ishq*).⁷

Sufis consider this longing (*shawq*) to be a serious disease because longing is for one who is absent and the Real (*al-haqq*) is Ever-Present and is never absent. This is why *Ṣūfī* doctrine is based on witnessing (*al-mushāhadah*). The reality of longing is a fire that takes over the heart and it has no cure except meeting the Beloved. Some of the Sufis have said, "Longing is a fire that emerges in the heart causing a separation between the one who is longing and the One for Whom he longs. But when the meeting occurs, then this fire is extinguished." Most of the secrets are known by witnessing the Beloved without longing. A *Ṣūfī* was once asked, "Do you long for Allah?" and he answered, "No, because longing is for someone absent and He (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) is Ever-Present."

This is a lofty way (*ṭarīqah*) which originated by uniting ardent effort (*al-himmah*) with longing (*ash-shawq*) to reach attainment. As for the signs of [this] longing: they manifest with the success of turning the senses from their [lower] desires and away from appetites, so that the person longs only for his Lord.

⁷ *'ishq* – passionate ardor; the deep secret love of oneness; holy consuming love; the state of *al-'ishq* is greater than any word, or even signs can express; the highest level of love containing all the stations of love; yearning, ecstasy, passion, amazement and annihilation are all a part of this love.

Know that the meaning of love is more refined than any thought and is concealed more than the secrets. Love does not enter a heart but it tears it apart so that the heart becomes bewildered; both the Beauty (*al-jamāl*) and the Majesty (*al-jalāl*) appear to it, so that it disappears, and evolves, and renounces the Garden (*al-jannah*) and becomes familiar with the Fire – this is the Fire of Love.

Al-Ḥāl: Know that the state (*al-ḥāl*) is a meaning that crosses the heart without pretension, stimulation or earning. It may be a state of sadness, contraction, expansion, reverence, delight, *etc.*, but it does not remain in the heart and so it is called a state (*ḥāl*), and when the heart fully possesses it, it is called a station (*maqām*).

Know that the states are gifts and stations [in formation]. Stations are also gifts, but in the stations the earning manifests and the gifting is concealed, which is contrary to states. When the state settles it transforms to a station. This is achieved by obedience. The slave can sometimes distinguish its causes but sometimes he cannot; he finds within himself a contraction or an expansion without knowing its cause, or whether it is forgetfulness or heedlessness.

Yaqīn (certitude): Know that certitude (*yaqīn*) is gaining knowledge (*‘ilm*) through the logical intellect by Signs. On the other hand, the experience of certitude (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*) is gaining knowledge by witnessing. As for the reality of certitude (*al-ḥaqq al-yaqīn*) it is gaining knowledge by the annihilation (*fanā’*) of the slave’s qualities and by his remaining (*baqā’*) in existence by the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) through experiencing gnosis (*ma‘rifah*) and witnessing (*mushāhadah*).

Actually, what is annihilated from the slave is his qualities, not his self, and so the essence of the annihilated slave must persist in existence. The slave’s self does not annihilate in the Real Self as some ignorant people think. On the contrary, as long as the slave approaches Allah in binding servitude (*‘ubūdiyyah*), and as long as he manifests helplessness,

and as long as there is annihilation of all the qualities that are in opposition to binding servitude, Allah will gift the slave with His Favor and give him the true praiseworthy qualities in substitution for the blameworthy qualities that were annihilated. This is because Allah is Powerful over everything, and He is Able, and nothing provides for Him but His Being. No one can prevent what He gives and no one can give what He prevents. No one can stop what He has decreed and no one can change His Judgment. If Allah favors His helpless slave with a gift, the slave can manage the cosmos by the Will of his Master. So you must not think that the slave's self is annihilated in the Self of the Real Being (*adh-dhāt al-ḥaqq*) because nothing remains [in absolute existence] except the Real.

The Secret: Know that the secret is a Subtlety of the Lord and it is the hidden spirit; when it descends a degree, it becomes a spirit and when it descends another degree, it is called a heart.

Know that the self (*an-nafs*), the spirit (*ar-rūḥ*), the heart (*al-qalb*) and the secret (*as-sirr*) are names for the one who is named. Know that there is no multiplicity in the multiple names; for they are mere names of the one being named. The explanation of this is that Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) created the human's spirit from the pure chosen Godly Light which He originated by the contraction of the Lordly Cloud (*al-'ama' ar-rabany*), which He made to dwell in the spirit's locus in which it remains in perfect gnosis of Allah. Thus the original and true human's spirit is settled in His love and unity and has gnosis of His names and qualities, and does not turn to otherness and does not care but for Him. It remains like this in ultimate purity and is far beyond what the mind can grasp. Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) then made the spirit dwell in the vessel of the human body and as it settled the body gained movement and consciousness.

When the spirit dwells within the body it is named *nafs*. The *nafs* is the subtle vapor that carries the power of life, motion and consciousness.

So the condition of *nafs* exists, but the *nafs* itself does not exist because it is formed by the unity of the spirit with the body, and when they separate, the *nafs* [or the individual self] disappears from existence. The *nafs* is then the subtle vapor and is the source of all blameworthy characteristics and diseased qualities, as long as it rules the slave.

Expressed in another way: the spirit is captured by the hand of the individual self (*nafs*). The pursuit of the selfish *nafs* is only to satisfy itself, but the fact is that this [desire] leads to its destruction because it is removed from the Godly Presence in accordance with the luminous intensity of the [original] spirit. This happens when the spirit settles in the body and is polluted by blemish and disease and the ruling of the evil ego takes over so that the person becomes corrupt (*fasiq*) and strays from the Command of his Lord.

And as long as the spirit inclines to disobedience and opposition, and follows the descending desires it is called the commanding self or the ego-self (*an-nafs al-ammārah*) because the *nafs* in this station commands to evil. But when the Godly Lights pass by the *nafs* they drive out some of the offensive qualities and opposition and lead the *nafs* through repentance in which it begins to scold and blame itself and to regret its transgression of the Godly Rights. In this station the spirit is called the blaming self (*an-nafs al-lawwāmah*) because of its reproachful nature.

If Godly Lights pass by the *nafs*, they demand departure from dense disobedience [*i.e.* the major sins], but minor opposition remains. The *nafs* is then called heart because it smells the fragrance of the Holy Presence. This fragrance stirs the *nafs* and the heart longs for its original place in eternity, but sometimes the dense layers of physical nature overcome the heart and it seeks to fulfill its desire. It is for this reason that it is called heart (*qalb*) because it constantly fluctuates in states.

However, if the Godly Light emanates upon the soul from the Holy Presence It demands the purification of all dense and subtle opposition [to the Divine Will]. In this station, the spirit is named the secured, tranquil self (*an-nafs al-muṭma'innah*). Nonetheless, the *nafs* is still inclined to

other than Allah; even though the self glorifies Him, some deviation remains because the self is not fully upright. But when Allah emanates the Godly Light which demands the destruction of choice and everything familiar by a return to Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*), naked from everything except Him, then, in this station, the soul is called the contented self (*an-nafs ar-rāḍiyah*). In spite of this there still remains some traces of what was destroyed inside the heart. These traces are like scars from the past. But when the existence of the self is eradicated and the witnessing [of the existence of the self] completely disappears, the Greatest Light of [the Godly] emanation (*al-fayḍ al-illāhī*) occurs. In the language of the gnostics it is described as the Greatest Opening (*al-faṭḥ al-ʿzam*). In this station, the soul's senses and comprehension is nonexistent so that there is no sign, no illustration, no name, and no witnessing, except witnessing the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) by the Real, in the Real, for the Real, from the Real. This is expressed in the language of the gnostics as annihilation of the annihilation (*fanā' of the fanā'*). Contentment of the Creator is complete and the soul is named the pleased soul (*an-nafs al-marḍiyyah*).

And when He emanates upon the soul from the Lights of the Holy Presence what is demanded by its distinctive rank, He gives the soul knowledge of its qualities and of what rightfully belongs to it. And when the soul encompasses the levels with knowledge and attains the obligations of all the levels with their specific demands in general and in detail, then in this station the soul is named the perfect soul (*an-nafs al-kāmilah*).

And when He emanates upon the soul from the Lights of the Holy Presence that which demands the destruction of all illusions and expressions of the sense perceptions, and when this becomes the outward and inward quality of the self (*nafs*), then in this station, the self is named the hidden (*al-khafī*).

And when He emanates upon the soul from the Lights of the Holy Presence that which demands what is related to the First Purity, as sunlight

is related to the night, then in this station the self is named the most concealed (*al-akhfā*).

In this manner, the soul continues to ascend in every station, and earns, due to the outflowing of epiphanies, gnosis, knowledge of the sciences, secrets and openings. The station above the station of the most hidden is named the station of the most extreme. The next station is named the station of the secret, then the secret of the secret, then the secret of the secret of the secret. In the fourth station, these names are repeated in the same manner as you ascend the five levels which follow, and then the ten levels, and the ascent continues like this eternally in the Garden of the cosmos.

Know that the world of the presence of the qualities or the corporeal world (*‘ālam al-mulk*) is the world of witnessing (*‘ālam al-shahāda*); it is dense (*kathif*) and actualized by sense perception. But the spiritual world (*‘ālam al-malakūt*) is the world of subtle (*laṭīf*) meanings and contains the Garden (*al-jannah*), the Throne (*al-‘arsh*), and the Seat (*al-kursī*), etc. So one can be conscious of the corporeal world through sense perception and imagination, and, on the other hand, conscious of the spiritual world through the intellect, understanding and comprehension. Regarding the world of possibility and power (*‘ālam al-jabarūt*), one can become conscious of it through both sense perception and what that entails and the intellect and what it entails, not as in the beginning state but in another state.

The fourth world is that which Might (*al-qadīr*) did not manifest, and it contains that which cannot be comprehended in all the worlds. Then know that to be actualized by Allah means that the creature has no share. This is the epiphany of the Essence (*at-tajallī adḥ-dhāt*) which as explained before, is impossible, so understand!

Regarding this, Abu Bakr, the believer, may Allah be pleased with him, said, “The incapacity to comprehend consciousness is comprehension” because the traveller moves through stations and in every station a light of the Essence of the Light of Being is revealed to him in

accordance with his readiness and receptivity and *by* that Light he knows his Lord and Creator. But if he continues ascending the stations, thinking that he has full knowledge, he will arrive at a station in which he will realize that the Essence of Being (*adh-dhāt*) has the peculiarity that He cannot be known. In this station, he declares, "The incapacity to comprehend consciousness is comprehension." This means that he has indeed comprehended that the Essence of Pure Being (*adh-dhāt*) cannot be fully known. This is the highest station, but do not be deceived thinking that the possessor of this station has not attained because, on the contrary, whoever has not arrived at this station is lacking in gnosis. But the one who arrives at this station is the one who has perfect gnosis. This is why, in this station, the traveller invokes Allah, saying, "My Lord, increase my knowledge," [Q20:114] or he invokes, "My Lord, increase my bewilderment of You," and he refers to the bewilderment that occurs at the beginning of travelling, so understand because this is very subtle and free from error and know that the Reality (*al-ḥaqīqah*) of the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) cannot be completely known except by the Real (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*).

The Singularity Level

The Singularity (*al-aḥadiyyah*) or unity as in “Say: He is Allah, One.” [Q112:1] is the disclosure of the Essence (*at-tajallī adh-dhāt*) not of the names, nor of the qualities, nor of any of the effects; it is the definite clear Essence without looking at any consideration of the qualities or the creation. There is no manifestation of the epiphany of the Singularity (*at-tajallī al-aḥadiyyah*) in the cosmos except *you* in your very essence, if you forget about all the qualities considered to be yours and perceived by your being the manifestation of your being, so that you are conscious of your being, within your being, without relating even any true quality of your qualities to you.

The Singularity (*al-aḥadiyyah*) is the first manifestation of the Essence. Nonetheless, describing the creature with singularity is forbidden because binding servitude (*al-‘ubūdiyyah*) is the fulfillment of promises, the keeping of boundaries, and the contentment of what exists and being patient with what is lost. So binding servitude (servitude unified with Allah) is the quality of the one who witnesses himself in relation to his Lord. Know that Allah has declared that His purified chosen ones will not leave the lower world except with the chain of bondage in servitude around their necks. Anyone who busies himself with other than Allah loses his life and the peace. If one wants peace, let him prefer Allah to everything else. Servitude unified with Allah is to realize that there is no power or strength without Him, and to affirm that Allah is the Provider by establishing His right to be obeyed. Know that worship (*al-‘ibādah*) is a characteristic of the common faithful believers (*al-mu‘minīn*) but binding servitude (*al-‘ubūdiyyah*)⁸ is a characteristic of the special people (*al-*

⁸ “Servitude (*‘ubūdiyyah*) is that you be His true slave in every moment just as He is your Lord in every moment, and it is to relinquish any claims or pretensions of power or ability from oneself, and to accept what wealth and blessing He gives you and loans to you.” Sidi Shaykh Muḥammad Sa‘id al-Jamal ar-Rifa‘i ash-Shadhuli, page 80. *How the Arrival is Realized O People of Hearts and Souls and Intellects*. 2004.

khawāṣṣ) and slavery (*al-'ubūdah*) is a characteristic of the elite among the specials (*al-khawāṣṣ al-khawāṣṣ*).

Know that purification (*at-taḥīr*) is Allah's protection of the slave against disobedience. There are many types:

- outward purification is Allah's protection from disobedience;
- inward purification is Allah's protection from the hidden whisperer, from illusions and pictures;
- purification of the secret is protection from being unmindful of Allah even for the blink of an eye;
- public and secret protection is for whomever is granted success in preserving the rights of the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) and the rights of the creatures.

Regarding aspiration (*al-himma*) it is to direct the heart fully with all of its spiritual powers to attain perfection of one's self and to help others to attain it as well. The gnostic family are the ones who are conscious of the essence in everything. The glitter of visible signs diminishes for the gnostic who returns to a state of real knowledge so that the revelation, which his mind used to deny, becomes firm. This is why I say:

*If you only look at His rising light,
[realize that] the manifestation of His unity is hidden;
If you see this manifestation of unity your secret will become firm,
Even the most experienced person with sound logic would be
perplexed;
For the one with true experience is the one who receives by His love,
and is thus not affected [by the multiplicity of creation];
Diminishing [of the glittering multiplicity of creation] is the rising of
the Law [of unity] not its abrogation;
For She (i.e. the Essence of unity) is Existence and there is nothing
but Her; so become purified.*

Know that aspiration (*al-himma*), the quality of yearning, longing, or striving to reach God has three stages: 1) awareness (*tanbiḥ*); 2) desire (*irāda*); and 3) real aspiration (*al-himma ḥaqīqiyyah*).

1) Awareness is the heart's awareness of what the person's reality demands of him, in regard to his desires, whether possible or impossible; it is the detachment of the heart's desire so that the person is able and determined to look at the ruling of what he desires. If knowledge and wisdom dictate retreat, then the person must resist that desire, and if the verdict is to pursue it, awareness gives him the *himma* to pursue it. So the one who has this *himma* needs knowledge of what he desires.

2) As for the *himma* of desire, it is the first sign of the seeker's credibility. This *himma* is accumulative and nothing can stand against it. It is spiritual *himma*, and when it catalyzes within a person it can affect the cosmos. This has become known even to people with no revelation or strength of faith whose desire compensates for that.

Know that the signs that manifest in the world by the hands of some people go back to *himma*; for it has power, and when it is firmly established in a seeker it can influence the perfect *shuyukh* (plural of *shaykh*) so that they handle them with this power. Sometimes a door of knowledge opens for the *shāykh*, but it is not meant for him; it is opened by the *himma* of the seeker who sees that the *shāykh* has this knowledge. The knowledge can come immediately to the *shāykh* by the seeker's demonstration of *himma*. This enables the *shāykh* to help him arrive at what he pursues; for the seeker does not accept help and knowledge but from the *shāykh*. In other words, because of the collective aspiration of the seeker (*al-murīd*) and the *shāykh*, what the seeker pursues can be achieved.

3) As for real *himma*: it is the accumulation of desire by the purity of inspiration. This is possessed by the great *shuyukh* among the People of Allah who attach their *himma* to what is right because it is a *himma* of the Singularity that such a right be established; it belongs to the Being of Allah. These great *shuyukh* escape multiplicity and seek unity (*at-tawhīd*) and relate the multiplicity to the names. They are distinguished by this [ability or character trait] even though they are at different levels. Allah treats them in accordance with their levels because in each station there is a direction that faces the Real. He distinguishes them because for every rank in the existence, there must be a presence [or a representation] and the ruling, for every existing creature is in accordance with its rank.

Consciousness and Reverence of Allah and Guarding One's Self Against Evil

Know that for the common people, *taqwā*⁹ is to avoid any sinful action and any sinful non-action, but for the special people it is to free the heart of everything that keeps it busy with other than the Real (*al-ḥaqq*). Know that the station of *taqwā* is earned by the slave and this is why Allah orders it. And this is the case of all the Commands of Allah: if it is established, its station is earned. "Be wary of God, and God will teach you." [Q2:282].

Godly *taqwā* is divided into two aspects: The first aspect is that Allah orders us to be conscious of Him, and to revere Him as He ought to be revered, and to guard ourselves from evil because we are faithful believers. And the second aspect is that He orders us to do so as much as we can, but He does not designate the quality of the category of people who are obliged to do so.

⁹ *taqwā* – God fearingness; reverence and piety which comes from the awe of God.

Nonetheless, the path of godwariness, *at-taqwā* has three levels. The first level is for the common people and it means to free one's self from disobedience, and it manifests through different situations and through avoiding suspicious actions and avoiding the prohibitions. It also means to purify offensive deeds with the water of good deeds.

The Passionate Soul [or appetite self] (*an-nafs ash-shahwāniyyah*)¹⁰ is the subtle vapor that carries life, causes sensory perception, motion and will. The wise name it the vital spirit (*ar-rūḥ al-ḥayawānī*). It is the primordial substance (*al-jawhar*) that rises within the body. When it rises outwardly and inwardly upon the body it causes wakefulness, but when it rises only inwardly upon the body, it causes sleep. When it sets, or its effect is interrupted, death occurs. Glorified is the Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*) Craftsman (*al-Ṣanīʿ*)!

The Expressive Soul [or the rationally speaking soul] (*an-nafs al-nāṭiqqah*) is an essence abstracted from materialism in itself, but it is described in relation to the materialism of actions. So it can be called the commanding ego (*al-ammārah*), the blaming [or reproachful] self (*al-lawwāmah*), the inspired soul (*al-mulḥammah*), the satisfied soul (*ar-rāḍiyah*), the pleased soul (*al-marḍiyyah*) or the perfect soul (*al-kāmilah*). It is named in accordance to its qualities. If it agrees with and is ruled by the previously mentioned passionate self, it is named the commanding ego (*al-ammārah*). [Q12:53]. If it calms by following the obligatory duties and surrenders to following the Real (*al-ḥaqq*), but at the same time some inclination to passionate pleasure remains, it is named the blaming self (*al-lawwāmah*). [Q75:1-2]. If the inclination to passionate pleasure disappears and the soul is strengthened in opposition to the appetite self and the inclination toward the holy world increases, so that the soul begins to receive inspiration, it is called the inspired soul (*al-mulḥammah*) [Q91:7-8], which is then the locus of passion (*ʿishq*) and infatuation (*hayaman*). However, some disturbance still remains due to

¹⁰ Desire which has an object not sanctioned by the Law.

the closeness of the commanding ego. When this disturbance calms and the appetite has no authority over the soul so that it forgets desire altogether, then it is named the tranquil and secured soul (*an-nafs al-muṭma'innah*).

When the ascension of the soul increases, so that all the stations lose importance in its sight and all desires become annihilated, it is called the satisfied soul (*ar-rāḍiyah*). [Q89:27]. If this state increases, the soul becomes pleased with the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) and with the creation. In that state, if it is ordered to return to people, it will guide and perfect them, and it is then called the perfect soul (*al-kāmilah*). I shall mention the qualities of each soul later in its suitable chapter. I shall also mention its signs, traits, states, world, and its qualities, whether praiseworthy or blameworthy, as well as what happens to the traveller. For example, I will mention the traveller's exceptional manifestation beyond his normal habit once he is qualified with the qualifications of one of the levels of the soul. I shall also mention the suitable rituals of remembrance (*dhikr*) specified for each level, as well as other related matters, Allah willing (*ʿinshāʾllāh*).

Know that the previously mentioned essential substance (*jawhar*) that is named the expressive soul has other names as well. This soul is called the heart, or the subtle human faculty, or the reality of the human being. It is [the spirit's dimension], which is conscious of the world, that is commanded and obliged to follow the [Godly] Law. This essential substance has two dimensions: an outer one which is the previously mentioned passionate self (*an-nafs ash-shahwaniyyah*) and an inner dimension which is the spirit (*ar-rūḥ*). There is an inward dimension for the spirit (*ar-rūḥ*), which is the secret (*as-sirr*), and there is an inward dimension for the secret, which is the secret of the secret, and there is an inward dimension for the secret of the secret, which is the hidden (*al-khafāʾ*), and there is also an inward dimension for the hidden, which is the most concealed (*al-akhfāʾ*). To sum this up, the inward dimension of a thing is its reality and substance.

I will now clarify the matter of the further inward dimension of an inward dimension by this following example: The inward dimension of a bed is the wooden pieces, and the tree is the inward dimension of the wooden pieces, and the inward dimension of the tree is the four elements, and the inward dimension of the four elements is the primordial substance (*hayūlā*).¹¹ So understand this realization that is actualized for you because you cannot see it so described in any other book, and you can only hear it said that this thing is the inward dimension of that thing, but you do not know the inward Reality.

If you know this, then you know that this matter is the singular Divine thing and it is most subtle and imperceptible, the Most Hidden. When it descends one degree and becomes denser it is called Hidden. When it descends a second degree, and its density increases, it is called, the Secret of the Secret. As it descends further, it is named the Secret, then the spirit, then the Heart, then the Rational Soul and the subtle humanity, and then the human being. In this last degree it has four names, and when it descends one further degree it becomes the human animal or the commanding ego (*an-nafs al-ammārah*).

¹¹ *hayūlā* – the primordial substance in which the four elements (air, earth, water, and fire) originate. “God is identical with the existence of the things, but He is not identical with the things. The entities of the existent things are a hyle or primordial substance (*hayūlā*) for the things or they are their spirits. Existence is the manifest dimension of those spirits and the forms of those hyllic entities. So all existence is the Real Manifest, while His Nonmanifest is the things.” -ibn al-Arabi. The more balanced the body’s constitution, the more it is able to act as a perfect mirror for the spirit which God breathes into it.

also see: The Reality of the Substance Matter of the Adamic Human Form, Sidi Shaykh Muḥammad Saʿid al-Jamal ar-Rifaʿi ash-Shadhuli. How the Arrival is Realized O People of Hearts and Souls and Intellects. 2004.

Know that the purpose of travelling the path of *taqwā* is to ascend gradually to this Lordly Order and to its original degree with the medicine prescribed by the most perfect among the perfected ones, the spirit of our beloved guide and master, Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*). This prescribed medicine is represented by fasting (*ṣawm*), establishment of prayers (*ṣalāt*), and by minimizing one's speech and by being compassionate toward people. It is represented by remembrance (*dhikr*), contemplation (*fikr*), seeking forgiveness (*'istighfār*) and by sending blessings to our Master, Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*). The traveller must also avoid eating unlawful food and abstain from all the other prohibitions, and abide by the Godly and Praiseworthy Commands. He must never exceed the limits set by the Noble Law. If he opposes this and disobeys, then his disease can never be cured. Whoever tries to satisfy his thirst without legal medicine, will never be cured; his disease will continue to increase becoming worse and worse.

When the student (*tālib*) of perfection is in the lowest degree, by which I mean the degree of the human animal, and his self commands him to evil, then his cure is [the remembrance and invocation of] *lā 'ilāha 'illā'llāh* [There is no deity except Allah]. With this cure he ascends to the degree of the heart. He must constantly be in remembrance and use this invocation, striving (*mujāhada*) with utmost effort, using his utmost strength to alert his limbs from heedlessness and distraction. If the seeker arrives at the degree of the heart and wants to ascend further toward the degree of the spirit, his cure is to decrease his food and sleep, and to invoke the name – Allāāh Allāāh Allāāh – loudly and clearly, in abundance.

I shall later mention the medicine that the seeker needs in travelling toward Allah by which he can ascend, one degree after another, until he arrives at the place where the human picture, full of sin veiling him from the Lord of the Worlds (*rabbi-l-'ālamīn*), falls down.

Criticizing this World and its Pleasures, and Clarifying its Reality

Know, my beloved, that this world (*ad-dunyā*) is everything that happens before death – good and evil. The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) made an exception for the good when he criticized it, saying, “This world is cursed and everything in it is cursed except that which is for Allah; all Might and Glory belongs to Him.” He (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) also said, “Accursed is the lower world and everything in it except the remembrance of Allah and that which is related to it.” Indeed, the lower world and all that is related to it is cursed except commanding what is good and prohibiting what is naturally rejected, [and also] except that which is sought for the face of Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*). [Know that] what was made an exception in the *ḥadīth* also belongs to the lower world because it takes place in this world, but he made an exception because it accompanies the slave after death. The Messenger of Allah expressed this when he said, “Three things of your world were made loving to me: women, perfume, and the delight of my eyes is in the prayer.” Notice that he mentions the prayer as something from the lower world because its motion includes the senses and the outward observation. But it was understood from this that every pleasure has a fruit after death; so prayer is not from the cursed lower world, but is the fruit by which Allah is pleased.

[Know that] the things that are cursed are those things which are pursued for a hasty purpose and yield no fruit after death. However, there is a middle way between the two mentioned. Every fortune that helps a person to do good toward the final world (*‘ākḥira*) belongs to the first category of pleasing pursuits, and it belongs to the deeds of the final abode because it prepares for it. So when a person fills half of his stomach with food, he enjoys the pleasure of eating, but he has satisfied his Protector at the same time. In other words, he gains the fortune of the lower world and the fortune of the final abode. This is why the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla*

allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām) said, “Dress up, eat, and drink, and fill only half of your stomach; for this is a characteristic of prophethood.”

If you know this, then you know that the lower world includes everything that keeps you busy from Allah and everything that makes you heedless of directing yourself toward your Lord. Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta‘ālā*) clarifies the reality of the lower world when He says, “The life in this world is play and a passing show, and ornament and boasting among you, and rivalry between you over piled up goods and children.” [Q57:20]. All of these offensive deeds are from the seven offenses that Allah mentions in His Mighty Book. He says, “Made alluring to the people is the love of lust for women, children, heaped up piles of gold and silver, marked horses, cattle, and tilled land. That is the enjoyment of the life of this world.” [Q3:14]. Offensive and ugly deeds result from these seven [desires], but these [desires] are not unworthy in themselves because they can lead toward the Final Abode (*‘ākhira*) if they are used in the right way.

The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “There is none worthy to aspire to [their state] except two: a person to whom Allah provided wealth and so he spends for His cause morning and evening, and a person whom Allah provided with [comprehension of the] Divine Recital, [al-Qur’ān] so that he spends his day and night establishing it.” Know then that the Messenger of Allah cursed the lower world that is far from Allah and His Message, and far from good purposes, but he cursed only that which causes the slave’s heedlessness and takes the traveller away from obeying Allah because it keeps his heart busy, taking his heart away from his Lord.

Know that this world does not become peaceful for the believer because how could it when it is his prison and trial? The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “Whoever loves his lower world harms his final abode and whoever loves his final abode harms his lower world. So prefer what is eternal over what will annihilate!” He also said, “The love of the lower world is the main cause of every sin.” And,

“How perplexing! Indeed, it is most perplexing that the believer in the eternal abode pursues the allure of the deceptive, endangering house.”

Nonetheless, the lower world is worthy of being regarded with honor and it is plentiful, and Allah places you in charge of it, but He is observing what you do. When the lower world was expanded [in abundance] and eased for the Children of Isrā’īl they became lost in its beauty, in corruption and in the desire of what is pleasurable. The Prophet Jesus (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “Do not take this world as a Lord; for it will take you as slaves. Entrust your treasures with One who will never lose them; for the possessor of the treasure of this world fears the destruction of his treasure, but the possessor of the treasure of Allah does not fear the destruction of his treasure.”

Our Prophet, Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “The faithful believer is between two fears: the fear of a past that he does not know what Allah will do with, and fear concerning his remaining, determined time, which he does not know what Allah will decree. Let the slave then invest his soul in himself, invest his lower world in his final abode, invest his youth in his old age, and invest his life in his death; for the lower world was created for you, but you were created for the final abode. By the One in Whose Hands rests my soul, there is no one who accepts excuses after death, and there is nothing after the lower world except the Garden or the Fire.”

Know that money can be the cause of the destruction of its possessor, and the cause of his ruin in the final abode. That is, if money is spent on disobedience and evil, and if through it, corruption and appetite takes place even though money, in itself, is good. So it must be used to please Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*). If a person obtains wealth, and he spends it only on food, drink and in adorning himself and, at the same time, does not follow what Allah has made obligatory upon him, such as, giving charity, and feeding and helping the poor, then this wealth will have no everlasting benefit. On the other hand, if he fulfills the rights of people, without abusing or belittling anyone, and without being excessively

arrogant in dealing with Allah’s creatures, then, in this state, he will triumph. Allah will be pleased with him, will honor him, and will permit him to enter the Garden by what he offered in advance for the face of Allah (*subhānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*).

Know that good money is good for any one who uses it in obedience, spending it on the poor and the needy. Money is not good or evil in itself; the good and evil exists in the person’s soul. If a person spends for good, it brings good, and if he spends for evil, it brings him evil. The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “The Fire is veiled by the desire (*ash-shahwa*), and the Garden is veiled by obstinate contention.” And by veiled he means concealed. Meaning that whoever follows desire will fall into the Fire by his action, but he cannot see the fire, he sees the desire, and whoever endures the difficulty of resisting worldly desire and submits the whole matter to Allah, He will permit him to enter into the Garden.

One of the Prophet’s Companions said, “Once, I came to the Prophet while he was reciting. When he finished his recitation, he said, ‘Allah says: O Son of Adam! You say, my money! my money! but do you own any of this money except that which you ate and then consumed, and that by which you dressed and wore out, and that by which you gave charity and so saved?’” And he (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) also said, “Being rich does not mean you have plenty of money, but being rich is the satisfaction of the soul,” which means that being rich does not mean to have an abundance of the perishable things of the lower world, but being rich means that the person accepts what Allah gives him.

The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “Make good use of five [things] before five [things happen]: make good use of your youth before old age, and of your health before illness, and of your wealth before poverty, and of your free time before you are busy, and of your life before you die.” He (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) also said, “Nothing awaits you [in this world] but wealth that may cause transgression, or poverty that may cause you to forget Allah, or illness that

may corrupt, or old age that may cause confounding or death. [In addition] the imposter (*ad-dajjal*) is an unseen evil waiting and the Hour [is also waiting] and the Hour is more bitter and more cunning.”

This means that some of you are waiting for these things without doing any righteous deeds, and without directing yourself fully toward Allah by striving against your ego-self (*nafs*) before any of the above mentioned [realities] by the Prophet (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) take over and keep you busy, taking you away from obeying Allah. Wealth can keep you busy and take you away [from Allah]; it can also weaken your strength like old age. Death swiftly chases the human being and causes him to lose his chance of doing good. All of this is followed by that which is more severe – the Appointed Day (*yawm al-mi‘ad*), the Day of Resurrection (*yawm al-qiyāmah*) and the Standing for Judgment (*yawm ad-dīn*), the Day of sorrow and regret. It is a Day in which money and progeny will be of no help [to its possessor] and nothing else will help except to come to Allah whole heartedly. This is the Day of Reckoning (*yawm al-hisab*) in which whoever did an atom weight of good will see it and whoever did an atom weight of evil will see it.

Know that anything that keeps your heart busy, like money, will harm you; whoever loves his lower world and forgets his final world, harms his final abode.

Know that a man asked the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*), “O Messenger of Allah! Guide me to an action that if I do it Allah will love me and people will love me.” The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “Renounce the lower world and Allah will love you, and renounce what people have and people will love you.”

It is also narrated that the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “The worst vessel that the human can fill is his stomach. A few morsels are enough to establish the son of Adam’s enduring vigor, so if he must [eat] then [let his stomach be] one third for his food, one third for his drink, and one third for his breath.”

Encouraging the Travelling on the Path of the People of Allah, and Clarifying its Benefits

Know that seeking perfection is a most noble quality, and perfection means to divest oneself of blameworthy qualities [or character traits] and adorn oneself with praiseworthy qualities. The blameworthy qualities are: ignorance, anger, envy, avarice, arrogance, conceit, boasting, love of prestige and leadership, excessive talk, teasing, hypocrisy, pride, pointing to what shames others, prying into people's secrets, *etc.*

As for the praiseworthy qualities, they are: gnosis, knowledge, forbearance, purity, generosity, humbleness, kindness, gentleness, patience, gratitude, asceticism, reliance [on Allah] (*tawakkul*), love, yearning, modesty, contentment, sincerity, faithfulness, truthfulness, self-scrutiny, contemplation, mercy, beautiful manners, love of Allah, weeping, reverence for Allah, grief at transgressing the limits of Allah, being placid with Allah, soundness of inner being, sincerity, advising people, diligence in doing good for all people, *etc.*

Know that the purpose of travelling the way of Sufism is to be qualified by perfection and to be free of ugly qualities. This is the true pursuit for every soul and is commanded by Allah (*subhānahū wa-ta'ālā*). Some of these blameworthy qualities are:

Anger or irascibility (*al-ghaḍab*): Regarding ridding oneself of anger (*al-ghaḍab*), the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) said, "Do not be angry." Then he repeated the words one more time, saying, "Do not be angry." He (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) once asked, "Whom do you consider the strongest among you?" The Companions said, "The one who cannot be defeated by men." He (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) said, "No, this is not correct. The strongest among you is the one who controls himself when angry." The outward appearance of an

angry person is enough evidence for the ugliness of anger, and the inner appearance is even more ugly.

It was narrated that once ʿĀʾishah, the Prophet's wife, may Allah be pleased with her, got angry. So the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) said to her, "O Allah! Your *shayṭān* has just come." She then asked him, "And you do not have one?" He said, "Indeed, but I have invoked Allah, so He has helped me to overcome him, so the *shayṭān* surrendered to me and does not command me, but by good."

In conclusion, irascibility (anger) is a blameworthy character trait emerging from the boiling of the blood in the heart as it demands revenge. The opposite of this is forbearance (*al-hulm*), and if you start to practice it, it becomes habitual. The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) said, "Knowledge is gained by education, and forbearance is gained by practicing forbearance." Whoever seeks good, finds it, and whoever wants evil, it reaches him. This was expressed by the Messenger (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*), when he said, "Seek loftiness with Allah." The Companions asked, "O Messenger of Allah! What is loftiness?" He (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) said, "To remain connected with the one who cuts you off, to give to the one who deprives you, and to have forbearance when faced with ignorance from those who mistreat you."

This is why it is not permissible for the beloved to become angry except for the sake of Allah; being angry for the sake of Allah is an exalted rank which is possible only for those who in their ascent have reached the fourth degree, where the soul is named the secure, tranquil self (*an-nafs al-muṭmaʾinnah*). Whoever claims it for himself, while in a lower station, is a liar, and he is confusing truth with falsehood. The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) never became angry for the sake of the lower world, but he did feel angry for the sake of Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*).

Envy (*ḥasad*): is a blameworthy character trait and its substance cannot be removed from the inner being except by travelling the path of the People of Allah. Know that envy consumes the reward of good deeds just as fire consumes logs. The reality of envy is that the envious one hates to see the favors of Allah bestowed on his brother [or sister] and wishes that the favor would be lost. But when he neither hates to see the favors in his brother's possession nor wishes him to lose them, but he simply wishes for an equal favor, this is called aspiration (*ghabtah*). The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “The faithful believer aspires, but the hypocrite envies.” Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*) says, “Do not covet that by which Allah has made some of you excell over others.” [Q4:32]. This means that it is prohibited for you to wish the same favors to be yours to the exclusion of others. But if you wish for an equal gift, and do not wish the exclusion of another, then this is not blameworthy. All this concerns the affairs of the lower world, but if one aspires for a spiritual favor [without envy of another who possesses the favor], then this is a praiseworthy aspiration to Allah.

It was narrated that the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “Do not spy on one another, do not envy one another, do not hate one another, do not conspire on one another, but be the worshippers of Allah and be brothers [and sisters].” One day, the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) stood on a platform making a speech. He said to the people, “O you who have submitted [to Allah] by tongue, but faith has not entered your hearts! Do not harm the submitters, do not taunt them, and do not try to shame them because whoever tries to shame his submitting brother, Allah will disgrace him by exposing [his shame].”

Avarice (*al-bukhl*): Know that avarice (excessive desire for wealth) is a blameworthy character trait by Allah because He says, “Those who are saved from their own avarice – they are the successful.” [Q59:9]. And He says, “Let not those who hoard up that which Allah has bestowed on them of His bounty think that it is good for them. Nay, it is bad for them.

That which they have hoarded up shall be a collar around their necks on the Day of Standing for Judgment.” [Q3:180].

The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “Beware of avarice because it has destroyed those before you and led them to bloodshed and to profane what is most sacred.” He (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) also said, “The generous person will not be thrown into the Fire and I will be his companion, and the miserly person will not enter the garden and ³Iblīs will be his companion.”

Arrogance (*al-ghurūr*): Know that arrogance (*al-ghurūr*) is an unworthy quality; Allah (*subhānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*) says, “I will turn away from My Signs those who are arrogant on the earth without any right.” [Q7:146]. And He also says, “And every obstinate tyrant was [in the end] brought to naught.” [Q14:15].

The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) narrated that his Lord, High and Majestic is He, said to him (Ḥadīth al-Qudsī), “Pride is My upper garment and Might is My lower garment; whoever tries to take one of them from Me, I shall cast him into the Fire.” Arrogance is a quality in the soul that emerges from selfish deliberation.

Conceit (*al-‘ujb*): is also one of the blameworthy character traits; the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “Three qualities are destructive: avarice that is obeyed, a low desire that is followed, and conceit for oneself.” The reality of conceit is an inner one in which the person imagines that he has perfection in knowledge or action. If conceit enters the traveller to Allah, he must contemplate the state of one who dies while covering up the Truth after having been a worshipper, [see: Q7:176] because he boasted about himself in the same way as ³Iblīs did. The traveller to Allah must say to himself: Do not boast about your [good] actions until you become certain that your action was acceptable to Allah. An action, in which its acceptance has not yet been realized, cannot be a cause for the pride of its doer. There is no doubt that Allah disapproves of

arrogance; He (*subhānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) says, "But on the Day of [the battle of] Ḥunayn when your great number pleased you it availed you not at all." [Q9:25].

Boasting or delusion (*al-ghurūr*): is a characteristic of arrogance and it is a cause of ruin. Allah says, "Do not let the life of this world delude you, nor let the deceiver delude (*gharūr*) you in regard to Allah." [Q31:33]. Delusion is to believe in something that is in opposition to reality. This form of ignorance happens when the ego-self finds pleasure in everything that agrees with its lower desires, and with what comes to its imagination or by suggestion.

There are many types of arrogant people. Some of them harbor illusion that because Allah is Generous (*al-karīm*), Singularly Compassionate (*ar-raḥīm*) and Ever-Forgiving (*al-ghafūr*), they can indulge in sins. There is no doubt that Allah is Generous, Singularly Compassionate and Ever-Forgiving, but the Divine Recital, [al-Qur'ān] reveals that this does not mean that He will not bring a person to reckoning for what he does. It is also a Sign of His Tremendous Mercy that He shows us how to walk in accordance with His guidance. Allah (*subhānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) says, "Whoever Allah wishes to guide – He expands his breast for 'Islām." [Q6:125].

Some people harbor illusion because their fathers and grandfathers were close to Allah and were conscious of Him [*i.e.* they had *taqwā* – God fearingness], but at the same time, they do not travel the road to Allah as their fathers and grandfathers did, and they do not do what they did, and they do not remember that Allah says, "And when the Trumpet is blown, there shall be no [bonds of] kinship between them on that Day," [Q23:101] and they do not remember that the Prophet said, "The one whose deeds stagnate his arrival to Allah, his bonds of kinship will not expedite him."

The states of the arrogant are many, but, in conclusion, the traveller on the road to Allah must not be deceived by anything or become arrogant

because of anything. He must not stop with anything or be satisfied with trivial things. On the contrary, the traveller must seek [true] realization and actualization (*at-tahqīq*), assert [the Truth] and leave all illusions and lower desires. He must not believe in the outer picture of a thing because the cunning plots of the Evil One (*ash-shayṭān*) are many; but these tricks affect only the arrogant ones who are easily deceived by them.

Ostentation (*riyāʿ*): O traveller on the road to Allah! Beware of ostentation (*riyāʿ*) or pretentiousness which is hypocrisy because it is prohibited. Allah says, “Woe to those who pray – and are unmindful of their prayers – who want to be seen, and [yet] refuse small kindnesses.” [Q107:4-6]. And He also says, “Whoever hopes to meet his Lord, let him do righteous deeds, and let him not worship anyone as partners with his Lord.” [Q18:110]. The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) said, “The most worrisome action that I fear you will fall into is the lesser idolatry (*al-shirk al-aṣḡhar*).” The Companions asked, “O Messenger of Allah! But what is the lesser idolatry?” He (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) said, “Hypocrisy.” On the Day of Standing for Judgment, Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) will say to people, as He rewards them in accordance with their deeds, “Go to those you showed off for in the lower world and see if you find your reward with them.” [Ḥadīth al-Qudsī]. Know that there is no doubt that the hypocrite desires high regard of himself in the hearts of people, and that this is what motivates him to become a hypocrite. On the other hand, the seeker of the way of the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) should be working toward lowering regard for himself in the hearts of people. So the hypocrite is far from the way of the Real.

Know that loving leadership is not a praiseworthy quality and it obstructs the Road to Allah. The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) said, “It is sufficient evil for any person – except those who Allah, the Exalted protect – to have people pointing at him as prominent in his religious or worldly life.”

Talking excessively (*kathrat al-kalām*): Know that talking excessively is not a praiseworthy quality because it gives birth to some prohibited or discouraged qualities, such as mentioning previous sins and impolite conversation exceeding the limits set by Allah and His Messenger. Other lowly qualities of speech are: arguing, obscenity, cursing, sarcasm, mocking, insulting, backbiting, slander, divulging secrets, *etc.*

Nothing is more dangerous than the [spiritual] diseases of the tongue because all ugly qualities arise from it. This is why the Messenger of Allah praised silence and encouraged it. He said, "Silence is wisdom, but the silent are few." He also said, "Whoever remains silent, is saved." And he said, "Are people cast into the Fire on their faces for anything other than the harvest of their tongues?"

In addition, he said, "On the Night when the delightful secret was confided to me (*al-isrā'*), I passed by some people who were tearing at their faces with their nails. I asked, 'O Jibrīl! Who are these people?' He answered, 'They are the ones who backbite and slander people.'" Backbiting (*al-ghaybah*) is to mention something about your brother, knowing that if he heard it, he would be displeased, whether it is some characteristic of his body, his self or about his actions, words, spiritual way [religion], or concerning his worldly affairs, such as his clothing, his house, or his car, *etc.* If you mention any of these things, you are violating him whether he is absent or present.

Ridicule or jesting (*al-mizāh*): Know that making fun of someone or ridicule (*al-mizāh*) causes the heart to die and it is followed by darkness. If the traveller on the path knew that his state was lowered by ridicule, he would not do it again. But when he knows this inwardly, he must repent. On the other hand, the possessors of darkness do not acknowledge the disease of ridicule. The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) said, "Do not argue with your brother or make fun of him." If you say: but the Prophet of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) used to jest, I say:

You are right, but he always spoke the truth, and you are not capable of jesting in that way, so it is better for you to renounce it, except when you feel extremely oppressed or heavy hearted.

Boasting (*at-tafākhur*): Know that boasting (*at-tafākhur*) is a low quality and is prohibited as expressed by the Messenger of Allah. He (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “Allah has revealed to me: Be humble so that none of you will compete to claim superiority over another, and so that none of you will transgress over another, and so that none of you will oppress another.” A person can boast because of his wealth or ancestors or because of his devotion or knowledge, but in any case, it is ugly and not praiseworthy. This is because slavery (*‘ubūda*) is a requirement for the traveller on the path to Allah that must be actualized, so the wayfarer must not compete for Lordship (*rubūbiyya*); all these ugly qualities are in opposition to slavery.

Bad character traits (*sū’ al-khuluq*): Know that bad character (*sū’ al-khuluq*) is blameworthy and is not praised by Allah nor by people, whereas good character is praiseworthy. The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “By Him in Whose hand is my soul, no one shall enter the garden except the one whose character is good.” He (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) used to invoke Allah, saying, “O Allah! Improve my appearance and my character.” He (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) also said, “Allah surrounded *al-‘Islām* with the most noble ethics and with the most noble actions.” One of these noble character traits is to have good manners with those who live with you. [In general] you must be gentle, and perform good, common sense deeds, such as feeding the hungry, greeting people, spreading peace, visiting the sick, respecting elders, being a good neighbor, forgiving offenders, controlling rage, reconciling, being generous, and pardoning people without discrimination or prejudice.

Know that everything I have mentioned about the blameworthy qualities is only some of the ugliness a human contains; it is impossible to mention all of the low qualities here. However, if anyone travels the road in accordance with the ways that will be mentioned in the following chapters, he can rid himself of all of these low qualities and of all the hidden and manifested diseases. This is because during the travelling on the road [to Allah], the traveller uproots these qualities and diseases, and no trace of them remains. Whoever seeks to rid himself of these diseases and qualities without the prescribed way, let him know that he is seeking the impossible.

You can observe that when the righteous ones (*al-abrar*) rid themselves of one of these low qualities, they fall into another that is uglier because they have not travelled the road of those who are brought near (*al-muqarabūn*), [Q56:11; Q83:21] which is the road that rescues one from all diseases. So the righteous ones would know that they are in danger if they could but read what the Messenger of Allah said. He (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “The purified ones are in great danger.”

At this point, you have come to know the benefits of travelling the way of those brought near (*al-muqarabūn*) because the primary benefits have just been mentioned, but the greatest benefit of travelling this road is the connection and communion (*wiṣāl*) which is the arrival at the degrees of nearness to the Presence of the names of the Lord and His qualities; and so you arrive at proximity by the greatest vicegerency (*khalīfah*), and Allah is the One Who speaks the Truth and Guides to the path.

*The scene of Divine oneness is seen – I pass away from my ego-self;
And I disappear from the worlds in the presence of intimacy.*

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The Veils Between the Slave and his Lord

What the traveller on the path to Allah needs to remove the veils from his subtle humanity – repentance (*tawabah*), returning (*'inabah*) and detachment (*tajrid*) from the causes, and other ways essential for the spirit.

Know, my beloved, that the greatest spirit is the Adamic (*ādamī*) spirit which is a direct order from my Lord. It is a great secret, a Lordly subtlety (*laṭīfa*), and no one fully comprehends it, except Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*). This spirit has names and manifestations in the greater cosmos, and also within the microcosm, by which I mean, the Adamic world of names and manifestations.

Adamic names and manifestations enter the cosmos by the First Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-ʾāwwal*), which is the Greatest spirit by which the knowledgeable mean the Possessor of both the First Intellect and the Highest Pen.

This is because the First Intellect has three perfect faces which are perpetually renewed:

1) The first face is the presence of being and of general knowledge with no intermediaries, which preserves the knowledge that comes to awareness from the Unseen presence that brings the non-existence into being, making it the the First Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-ʾāwwal*). It is the first appearance from the Lord of mankind and the first acceptor of His illuminating presence.¹²

¹² The First Intellect, the Highest Pen is created by Allah without any intermediary; it is the active pole. Then everything else comes into creation through one or more intermediaries.

2) The second face of the First Intellect is the detail [*i.e.* the specific face] of what has been taken as general knowledge in the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawh al-mahfuz*) by the decree of Allah's saying, "I inscribe My Knowledge within my people (*khalqī*) and I inscribe what has been." (*Ḥadīth al-Qudsī*). This manifestation is called the Highest Pen (*al-qalam*) [and it is the faculty] by which the sciences are engraved on the tablet of the essence of the receptive being. Allah says, "[He] Who taught by the Pen." [Q96:4]. This [perfect] manifestation is the soul of our Master Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*).

3) The third face of the First Intellect is the bearer or transmitter of the first disclosure (*tajallī*) related to Allah's manifestation within Himself. [*i.e.* The face turned toward the occasions or things.] This manifestation happens because of the overpowering rule of unity and its expansion (*baṣṭ*). From this perspective, the First Intellect is the Real's Greatest, Praiseworthy spirit and it is the spirit's light because it gathers all the Godly *tajallīyyat*, which is the Originating cause of the spirits of all beings.¹³

Know that the First Intellect and the Highest Pen is one light, but when it is related to the slave it is called the Highest Pen. As for the First Intellect, in relation to our Master Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) it is Allah's creation Jibrīl (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) [the Holy spirit] eternally related to him (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*). So our Master, Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) is the father of Jibrīl and the origin of the entire creation.

¹³ The First Intellect, the Universal Soul, the Pen, and the Preserved Tablet are prototypes of cosmic activity and receptivity. Allah Says to it, "Write what has been [or what I have taught] and what will be [or what I will dictate to you], which is My knowledge concerning My creation until the Day of Resurrection."

Know this if you have not yet known it. This is why in his (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) Night Journey, Jibrīl stopped, and he (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) continued the ascent alone. The Trustworthy spirit Jibrīl was the treasury of the knowledge of Allah for the messengers, His entrusted ones. He (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) was taught by Jibrīl from the point of view that the branch is taught by its origin; the source of the teaching, regardless of the intermediary, is Allah.

Know that the First Intellect is the locus for the Godly knowledge in the Form of existence. [*i.e.* It came to understand from God what He taught it and He commanded him to write what He taught him in the Preserved Tablet ... and named it Pen.] So the First Intellect is the Highest Pen from which knowledge descends to the Preserved Tablet so it is the beauty of the spirit. Nonetheless, there are Godly Secrets within the First Intellect that the Tablet cannot contain, and there is Godly Knowledge that is not the locus of the First Intellect. So Godly Knowledge is the Mother of the Book, and the First Intellect is the clarifying leader (*al-‘imām al-mubīn*), while the Preserved Tablet is the clarifying Book. So the Tablet is led by the Pen and follows it, and the Pen is the First Intellect that rules the spirit and clarifies, in detail, the general matters in the world of Godly Knowledge which is expressed as *nūn* [in Arabic].¹⁴

And the difference between the First Intellect and the universal intellect and the life-accommodating intellect is that the First Intellect is the luminous Godly Knowledge appearing in its first descent designated (*ta‘yīn*) in the creature. The universal intellect is the [common] knowledge of the members of a designated species who possess intellect and the life-accommodating intellect is the balanced illumination of the intellectual law, and it is not consciously attained or comprehended except by the tools of thinking, reflecting and contemplating (*fikkr*). It is comprehended only by an appearance of the universal intellect, and there is no way to it except by what is known, and it has no thorn except one – the [physical] nature.

¹⁴ The essence of the existence of everything that Allah wants.

This is in contrast to the universal intellect that has two scales: wisdom and power. The universal intellect also has two ends: the Godly demands and the natural readiness of the vessels; and so it has two ways: the Godly Will and the demands of the creation. It has many measures and so in general it has no measure [*i.e.* the measures are limitless in accordance with what the creature needs to be perfected and prepared to receive Godly Knowledge].

Know that the Highest Pen is the first designation (*ta'yīn*) of the Real in the created manifestations in which Reality is distinct [or specified]. His saying distinct is because in the beginning, the creation has an obscure designation in the Godly Knowledge, then it has an existence within the Throne [of Authority], which is a general ruling, then it has a detailed manifestation in the Seat [of settlement], then it has a distinct manifestation in the Highest Pen. This is because the creature's manifestations in the former epiphanies are unseen, but the creature's existence in the Pen is a distinct existence, which is distinguished from the Real. The Highest Pen engraves what the soul demands [of Allah's Knowledge to manifest or to reflect His perfection in the physical world].

Know that the Preserved Tablet is the true Godly light revealed in every created sight in which the creatures are naturally engraved with the original inscription. This is because the Highest Pen flows within the Preserved Tablet bringing it into existence. Know then that the Preserved Tablet has a glimpse of Allah's Knowledge which He lets flow in accordance with the demands [for the perfection] of the realities of the existing creatures; and to Allah belongs the full knowledge beyond this. The true realities manifest in the outer appearances of the creation, as originated by the Power in Existence. So this faculty [of power] is not constant in the Preserved Tablet, rather, it appears within it when it first manifests, but there is [potential] power that may not appear within it [and this remains in the Realm of the Unseen]. All that is within the Preserved Tablet is the knowledge that begins with the visible existence until the

Day of the Standing and Resurrection and what that knowledge contains about the possessors of the Garden and the Fire in a detailed way.

"[The cosmos is] a book inscribed on a parchment unrolled." [Q52:2]

The Praiseworthy Reality: The Muhammadan Spirit (*al-ḥaqiqah al-muḥammadiyah: ar-rūḥ al-muḥammadī*)

Know that the Praiseworthy Reality is the true image of the ultimate truth of the realities. This is because the Praiseworthy Reality is a constant intermediary, in the barrier, or world of the interval between this world and the first heaven of seven heavens (*al-barzakḥ*) and in justice (*al-ʿadl*) between the thing and the Real in a way that no [particular] name or quality overcomes him (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) [*i.e.* he is well balanced]. This is the intermediation in *al-barzakḥ* and it is the essence of the Most Praiseworthy Light, which is alluded to when the Messenger of Allah said, "The first thing Allah created was my Light." He eloquently expressed this [subtle reality] in words. He (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) was the first in creation and from this perspective he was named the Light of the Lights, and he is also named, the Father of Spirits because he (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) is the last perfect creation, and after him Allah will not create an equal in perfection. He is [the presence of] the perfection of Allah. He is the Seal of the Prophets. The allusion to the first creation means His Light, and to the last means the manifestation of this Light. This is expressed when He says, "We are the First (*al-ʾāwwal*) and the Last (*ʾākḥira*)."

This perfect reality is the origin of all the Godly names, adding Lordship to it. The meaning of saying that this truth is the Praiseworthy Reality is that the elementary praiseworthy image is an image of a meaning and of a reality. This meaning and reality is the Ultimate Truth.

Know, my beloved, that the Praiseworthy spirit is considered the direction of the unity of the Lofty Pen, which is specialized for spiritual manifestation and related to the first epiphany by the overpowering rule of gathered-ness (*jam'*) and unity.¹⁵ Muḥammad's soul was the manifestation of this spirit because of the perfect completion of the receptivity of the mirror of the heart, of the pure and conscious one [who guarded himself against evil] (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*). Muḥammad's spirit is what comes next in resemblance to the Presence of the Real (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*). It is a purity that demands the direction of the heart to remain [living] in the realities of the name, the Real (*al-ḥaqq*). It was the name the Real that manifested within him so that everything of the universal spiritual realities, and everything in the holy worlds, simultaneously manifested within him. Everything appeared within him as it is in its reality [and origin], without changing, no matter which direction it pointed to. The manifestation of the names of the Real and the Reality of the spirit is a designation without lowering the firm transcendent purity of the First spirit, the Light, and without lowering the soul. Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) says in His Qur'ān: "And it is He Who has brought you all out of a single soul." [Q6:98].

The names of Allah manifested within the microcosm", and by this I mean the most hidden one who belongs to the Real, and who is the secret of the secret of the secret, the spirit, the heart, the expressive soul and the subtle humanity – the Greatest spirit, which is the first that Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) originated and brought into existence. Adam is then the greatest vicegerent (*al-khalīfah al-ādam*) and the greatest secret. His first descent from the most hidden station is the hidden and his last descent is the heart; so understand.

¹⁵ Also see pages 124-130. Sidi Shaykh Muḥammad Sa'id al-Jamal ar-Rifa'i ash-Shadhuli. *How the Arrival is Realized O People of Hearts and Souls and Intellects*. 2004.

Know that the heart in itself is the Greatest spirit and the greatest vicegerent which descended to this level. The heart is the manager of the affairs of the human body to which it is attached, in the same way that a passionate lover is attached to his beloved by his penetrating passion. This attachment occurs through the animal spirit (*ar-rūh al-ḥayawānī*), by which I mean the appetite self (*an-nafs ash-shahwaniyyah*), which was previously mentioned at the beginning of this book. The human spirit is subtle and the body is dense, and the animal spirit is between the subtlety and the density. So reconciliation is needed between the Greatest spirit and the body after its descension. Because the soul is attached to the appetite self, the *nafs* is named heart and it has two directions – one toward the sensory world, and one toward the holy world, the unseen. When the appetite becomes extreme, the self becomes a dense, sensory thing, by which the outer face of the glass is painted; the soul can see, through the glass, the picture on the other side.

This is why the heart is the most noble and the greatest appearance and it is the locus of the epiphanies and the treasury of the secrets of Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*). It is the locus upon which the realities of the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*) and the creation are engraved. Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*) describes this when He says, “In that there is a reminder for one who has a heart.” [Q50:37]. But He does not mean the piece of flesh within the human body because all animals have this piece of flesh. Know that the similitude of the one who possesses a heart refers to the perfect guide. He says, “Or he who listens attentively and is a witness,” [Q50:37] meaning the aspirant (*murīd*) seeking guidance for spiritual maturity (*‘irshād*) and seeking perfection (*kamāl*). This path is made easy for every person, but if anyone directs himself toward the world of the seen (*‘ālam ash-shahādah*) and forgets the holy world (*‘ālam al-qudsī*) above everything, he will be veiled from the lofty qualities and he will [eventually] become a mere animal.

But if a person directs himself toward the world of the unseen (*‘ālam al-ghayb*) until he forgets the world of the seen and of similitudes, he

becomes veiled in a way that he will not be able to recognize the lowly qualities when someone faces him with them, and so he becomes the same as an angel. And if a person directs himself to one of the two worlds without being diverted from the other world, he becomes a perfect person. This is a lofty station that is not easily attainable by everyone except those who travel the road of those who arrived at proximity after striving in the greatest struggle (*al-jihād*) against their ego-self.

It was narrated that the wife of the 'Azīz, [Zulaykha], said to Yūsūf (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*), "O Yusuf, desire and covetousness makes the royal into slaves, while patience and *taqwā* make slaves royal." Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) says, "Whoever is conscious of Allah, wards off evil and is patient [finds grace], for certainly Allah does not allow the wages of those who excel [in doing good] to be lost." [Q12:90]. This is because the heart has the right to be the prince of the body which should obey its commands and avoid its prohibitions. But if desire overcomes this prince, he takes his order from the desire and the matter is reversed, so that the heart becomes a subjugated slave [to the body].

Know that if the heart forgets itself in that accursed condition, and prolongs its sojourn there, this causes a loss of its specific quality, which is its ability to direct itself toward the world of the Unseen. This is described as the darkness of the heart. This is because the heart is like a mirror: when it is polished from rust and blemish, the person can see [the reality of] things through it, but if rust covers it, and there is nothing to polish it, then rust becomes ingrained within its inner substance (*jawhar*) so that it cannot be removed. The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) spoke about this when he said, "Indeed hearts rust just as iron rusts." After that, someone asked, "O Messenger of Allah, how can it be polished?" He (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) said, "By the remembrance of death and by reciting the Qur'ān."

It was also narrated that the Prophet of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) said, "Hearts are of many types: An abstracted, fruitful heart with a lamp within; this is the heart of the faithful believer. And a black

heart that is degenerated; this is the heart of the one who covers up the Truth. And a heart that is covered (closed) and is tied to its cove; this is the heart of the hypocrite. And a heart that is foliated with both faith and hypocrisy.” The resemblance of faith within the fourth heart is like that of a seed that one supplies with good water, while the resemblance of hypocrisy within it is like a wound or injury that supplies it with pus; whichever is stronger will rule over it.

What is meant by the first heart [in this *ḥadīth*] is the heart of the faithful believer, the perfect gnostic, and what is meant by the fourth [type of] heart is the heart of the wayfarer which depends on the state of his travelling. If he follows desire, then the heart will incline to disobedience and will be destroyed in the prison of [physical] nature.

If this heart directs itself to its [natural] world, the world of the Unseen, it will pursue the removal of the previously mentioned veils, one after the other.

Then all the blemish that belongs to disobedience and appetite will leave it, preparing it to receive the epiphanies, and the realities of things will be engraved upon it. The lower desires will also leave it gradually until it comes close to its original station from which it descended. This is the meaning of the removal of the veils, and the process [of removing the veils] will continue until no low desire remains within it; in that station the heart arrives at its goal and no veil remains between it and Allah.

It is narrated that the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, narrating what came to him directly from his Lord, “Neither My earth nor My heaven contains Me, but the heart of My faithful believer contains Me.” This means that none can see Him except the hearts of the faithful believers, meaning that He is in their hearts because there is no place for Him. When the heart of the faithful believer is polished and becomes a mirror, then, just as in the materialistic mirror in

which one perceives images of the world of possession (*'ālam al-mulk*), the heart becomes a mirror in which the contents of the world of the Unseen (*'ālam al-ghayb*) can be seen within it. This details the knowledge that explains how an image of something exists in the intellect because the intellect is the expressive self (*an-nafs al-nāṭiqah*) which is the heart, as you have just understood.

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The Veils and Repentance

The second khalīfah, 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "My heart saw my Lord." So, whoever wants to attain this happiness, and to ascend to the lofty degrees, let him first enter from the gate of all gates, which is repentance (*at-tawbah*). Repentance is named the gate of the gates because it is the first gate through which the slave enters into proximity in the gardens of the Lord. And know that repentance is obligatory because Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) says, "Repent to Allah, all of you, O faithful believers." [Q24:31]. And He also says, "O You who believe, repent to Allah, a sincere repentance." [Q24:31] and all the other *āyāt* agree that repentance is obligatory.

The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) said, "The repentant one is as one without sin; for repentance erases what happened before it." And He (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) also said, "The repentant one is Allah's beloved." And, "Allah is happier with the repentance of his slave than one of you whose camel escaped in the desert with his food and water; after he has lost hope of finding his camel, he suddenly sees it standing next to him, he takes hold of its bridle and, in sheer exultation, says, 'O Allah! You are my Slave and I am your Lord!'" His error is due to his excessive exultation.

Know that Allah accepts the repentance of his slave as long as he has not yet gasped [at death]. And know that repentance is an immediately incumbent obligation, since avoidance of sins and obedience to Allah are an unceasing duty. Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) says, “And repent, all of you, to Allah.” [Q24:31]. Whoever postpones repentance, his sins multiply. This is not the same as the multiplication of good deeds because when one abandons repentance, that in itself, is a sin which is added to his original sin, so he has two sins: the first sin is his original offensive action and the second sin, emerging from his first, is his absence of repentance. So he must repent from both sins, and if that is not forthcoming, his sins become four, *etc.* This multiplication is not like the multiplication of good rewards because offensive behavior does not multiply in the same way. Allah says, “Whoever comes [before Allah] with a good deed will gain ten like it, and whoever comes with an evil deed shall not be rewarded except by its like.” [Q6:160].

If you then look fairly and with compassion at yourself, you will see that your need for repentance is greater than your need for food, drink, and shelter, because sins veil you from beholding the Unseen and stand between you and the Beloved. The greatest veils between the slave and his Lord are the veils of sin, because these are made of darkness, whereas other veils, even though the wayfarer should seek to remove them, are made of light, and so they do not totally veil the slave. But the similitude of the veil that occurs as a result of sin is like that of a wall that stands between you and your object, so that you cannot see its locus, trace, or shadow. On the other hand, the luminous veils are like glass revealing what is beyond. This is what the vision senses, and it is similar with the heart. When the heart’s eye, which is called inner sight (*baṣīra*) is concealed by the dark layers of disobedience, that is, with that which covers (*rayn*), that which imprints (*ṭabʿ*), and that which seals (*kḥatm*), in this state, the person sees nothing of the lights of the Unseen. But if the person repents, the veils of his sins are removed from the eye of his heart and he will see what is with Allah. He then reveres Him, fears His

punishment, hopes for His reward, and continuously obeys Him and avoids His prohibitions.

At this stage, he is only veiled by the luminous veils ensuing from his dependence on his good actions because he comes to believe that he is the one who brought these actions into existence. But after Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*) removes this veil [of light] from him, as a blessing for his obedience, then the slave begins to see that the gift and true favor is from Allah; for it is Allah Who grants success in doing good deeds, and he, in fact, comes to perceive his shortcoming in thanking Allah for granting them. Indeed, the Giver and the Withholder is Allah, and He is also the One Who reveals the veils between the slave and his Lord.

Indeed, when Allah wills to better His slave, He dresses him in the garment of awareness (*at-taqwā*) and guards him against evil. Know that there is nothing in the hand of the slave: neither good nor evil; for everything is in the hand of Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*). So when this veil is removed from the eye of the heart, the slave thinks that he has arrived at Allah, because of the spiritual ecstasy associated with this station. But when the hidden subtleties actualize the slave, this veil is removed. He then continues to remove the veils, one after the other, as he walks through the demands of the stations and the gates until he finally reaches the seat of truthfulness and the houses of the beloveds. [Q54:55].

So understand, and do not think that Allah is something that can be seen by the physical eyes because of our analogizing the veils to glass, for He is far above that, and Allah is the One Who is in charge of your guidance!

If you have understood this similitude, then you know that repentance is obligatory by both transferred knowledge and intellectual knowledge, and that there is no arrival to Allah, except through it, and you also know the meaning of his saying: “Allah has seventy thousand veils;” and in another narration: “Allah has seventy thousand dark and luminous veils; were He to remove them, the glories of His face would burn away everything perceived by the sight of His creatures;” and in another

narration: "As far as His sight captures any of His creatures as His veil pours the light." The meaning of the veils is the darkness of sins and mistakes, and the meaning of the light is the wayfarer turning to the pleasures of the gardens, to the generous and honoring gifts (*al-karāmāt*), and to their epiphanies, and his desire of these pleasures. As long as something from these desires remain within the heart of the wayfarer, he is veiled from the Real. This is why the journey is lengthened for many travellers and some of them stop with half the road to finish or a quarter.

Know that in this context, the glories of His face are the rays of the light of the Essence. So the meaning of the previous *ḥadīth* is that: If Allah removes the veils, then the rays of the light of His Essence will burn all the creatures His sight reaches. What is meant by the creature His sight reaches is the traveller who removes the obstacles of the soul and is free from the ties of selfishness, and rids his soul of physical demands and prepares to receive the epiphanies of the lights, face to face. This means that if the mentioned veil is removed between the traveller and the facing lights, then the rays of these lights will burn what is left within the traveller that he could not burn by the fire of struggle. This is because the traveller arrives at the sixth station through [spiritual] practice and by striving, but the arrival at the seventh station does not happen except through the attraction of the Real's captivating rapport. This captivating rapport is the station of real certitude. Then you reach the realization [of the Truth], and are actualized by it.

Know that what benefits the traveller on the path to Allah in his travelling is witnessing the Unity of Being, not the knowing of It. So witnessing is a necessity that happens as a result of tiresome struggle and practice, and from [spiritual] poverty and surrender to Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*). This state does not change the traveller's following of the Divine Law, but if he does not follow the Divine Law, then he has failed.

Whoever wants to travel the road of the ones brought near and to arrive at real certitude, then he must first repent in order to remove the dark veils from the heart, and I mean the veils of sins. He must then, also

seek to set aside the luminous veils by ascending through the stations which will be mentioned later in their particular chapters, if Allah so wills.

The fruit of accepting repentance (*at-tawbah*) is regret (*an-nadima*). Regret is a state of the heart, and the states are not chosen, so how can repentance be obligatory if it is not a chosen state? I answer by explaining that the causes of regret are under the choice of the person because it happens by listening to admonishment, and by lessons and advice, and by learning beneficial knowledge, and by remembering Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) through ritual worship. It also happens through knowledge of the harmfulness of sins, and that sins are veils. But the greatest cause of regret is continuous remembrance by repeating the phrase: *lā 'ilāha 'illā'llāh* (there is no deity except Allah), because by this continuous remembrance, Allah ignites an angelic lamp by which the inner darkness is expelled so that the blemishes and the diseases that stop the aspirant from attaining happiness manifest to him. And even though he might have known about these diseases before, this knowledge had no light with it, so it was not beneficial. But having this knowledge, and combining it with reciting the name, results in igniting the Light, and so regret occurs, which is the meaning of repentance.

It was narrated that Shaykh 'Abdul al-Qadir al-Jilanī, may Allah sanctify his secret, used to advise any man who came to him complaining about leaving prayer or about not being diligent in establishing it, to remember Allah by reciting *lā 'ilāha 'illā'llāh*. And if another came to him complaining that he had committed adultery or that he drank wine, or that he committed any other offensive deed, the Shaykh would also advise him to practice the remembrance (*adh-dhikr*). There was no one who complained to him about doing something prohibited or about leaving something commanded, but he would order them to practice the remembrance.

Know that repentance is regretting past sins; for the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) said, "Remorse is repentance." Regarding the saying, "Repentance is also the determination not to return

to commit the same sin again,” this naturally associates regret with repentance; for whoever sincerely repents is determined not to return to commit it again.

This repentance, and I mean regret of past sins, is the repentance of the common people, and, without doubt, it is acceptable to Allah. As for the repentance of the special ones, it is repenting of everything that keeps the heart busy from the remembrance of Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*). As for the repentance of the elite of the special it is repenting from heedlessness, and from forgetting the Presence of Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*). Such is the repentance of the truthful ones (*ṣiddīqūn*), the intelligent ones, those who know the value of themselves, and those who know that every breath of theirs is better than the lower world and what it contains.

My beloved, open your heart; for I shall show you how to walk to the Real through your soul (*an-nafs*) and its stations. And I say, “Allah is the One sought for help.”

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The Commanding Nafs

an-nafs al-ammārah

And showing its walking, its world, its place, its state, its light or source of arrival, its qualities, its ugliness, and how to be free from it to ascend to the second station of the reproachful self (an-nafs al-lawwāmah), its walking toward Allah and its world, which is the world of the seen ('ālam ash-shahāda), and its place which is truthfulness, and its source of inspiration, which is the Divine Law (ash-sharī'ah).

You know from the previous explanation that the seven selves or souls (*nafs*) are one thing and are named by seven different names according to its qualities. So there is the commanding self, the reproachful self, the inspired self, the secure tranquil self, the satisfied self, the pleased self and the perfect self.

You also know that the expressive *nafs* is also named the heart, about which Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) says, "In this, there is a reminder for whomever has a heart." [Q50:37]. What is meant by the heart here is not the piece of flesh, as you already know, but it is the Lordly Subtleness (*al-latifa al-rabbaniyya*) that when it becomes blemished by inclining to the [physical] nature and becomes established in following its appetites, its praiseworthy qualities change and are replaced by the blameworthy traits and it cannot be distinguished from these low qualities, except in form, and so the *shayṭān* becomes one of its soldiers.

The qualities of the commanding *nafs* are ignorance, greed, arrogance, conceit, anger, evil, envy, and harming others by the tongue or hand, and it has many other unpleasing qualities that have been mentioned before. It is a cunning *nafs* about which Yusuf (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) said, "Surely the *nafs* command to evil." [Q12:53] and the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) said, "Your worst enemy is your self that is within you." This is because it fell into the darkness [of the physical] nature and cannot distinguish between reality

and falsehood, or between evil and good. The accursed *shayṭān* cannot enter a human except through the venue of the *nafs*.

So, my beloved, beware and do not feel secure in the presence of your *nafs*, and do not help it or support it when someone attacks it because this [not feeling secure] can help the *nafs* remember that the *shayṭān* is an enemy who wants to confuse and lead the *nafs* astray. If you leave the *nafs*, you will realize its enmity toward you. But if you submit to the *nafs* as it wants, then you will have all of the unworthy qualities and ugliness. This is why you must oppose and discipline the *nafs* by decreasing your food, drink and sleep so that you may weaken the animal self because if you weaken it, and abide by obeying Allah, then the noble, mighty, lofty soul will be released from the *nafs* named the commanding.

In this station, let the your *dhikr* be *lā ʿilahā ʿilla-llāh* while prolonging the *lā* and emphasizing the *hamzah* of *ʿil* in *ʿilahā*. And beware of pronouncing the *hamzah* in *ʿilahā* lightly because if you do, it will turn out as *yaa* and the word will become *layilāha ʿilla-llāh* and this is not the true Word of Unification (*tawḥīd*) and so there is no benefit in its repetition. So, keep reciting this remembrance standing, sitting or laying down at all times including early morning and late at night.

Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) says in Ḥadīth Qudsi, “*Lā ʿilahā ʿilla-llāh* is My fortress; whoever enters My fortress is safe from My punishment.” And the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) said, “*Lā ʿilahā ʿilla-llāh* is the best of *adh-dhikr* and has the best reward. The happiest of all people who will be granted my intercession is one who says it from the bottom of his heart. There is no slave who says it and then dies except that he will enter the Garden.” He (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) also said, “Renew your faith!” And when it was asked, “How can we renew our faith?” he replied, “Repeat the saying: *Lā ʿilahā ʿilla-llāh* because saying it removes any sin, and there is no action equal to reciting it; for there is no veil between it and Allah, and it reaches Him Alone.”

Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) says [in Ḥadīth Qudsi], "I am with the good that My slave thinks of Me, and I am with him as long as he remembers Me. So if he mentions Me within himself, I mention him within Myself; and if he mentions me in a group, I mention him in a group better than his." Also, the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) said, "There is no charity better than the remembrance of Allah," and he said, "Should I inform you about what is the best of deeds, the loftiest in degree, and better for you than silver and gold?" They said, "Yes, please do." And he said, "The remembrance of Allah." And he added, "When you pass by the meadows of the Garden, ascend." They asked, "O Messenger of Allah, what are the meadows of the Garden?" He replied, "The circles of remembrance."

This is why I say: enter therein, O seeker of salvation. Enter to be saved from your enemy by being sheltered in Allah's Shelter: *lā 'ilahā 'illa-llāh*. Free yourself from the prison of [physical] nature so that you can attain the lofty stations.

Know that when the aspirant mentions *lā 'ilahā 'illa-llāh* by his tongue and is lifted from himself in its meaning, in the unification of actions, the dark veils, which have resulted from past sins, are removed from his heart and he witnesses with the eye of insight that there is no mover or one who brings peace and there is no giver or preventer or harm or benefit, except Allah. He will experience this witnessing through direct tasting, and through a state, not through belief or thought.

Know that the experience of tasting and witnessing cannot be known except through the Essence of His Being. One of its signs is that you will not find yourself hating anyone at all, and you will not harm anyone – human or animal, not even an enemy. The effect of tasting and witnessing qualifies one with humbleness, politeness, and a continuous delight in the heart. It also has other songs manifesting the beginning of happiness, which is in the unification of actions. Discharge anything worshipped other than Allah from your heart because it is nonexistent, and close your

eyes and listen attentively to your remembrance, abide with purity and beware of that which is forbidden [by Allah].

Know, my beloved, that you must know what you need from the science of jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*) concerning how to purify yourself and knowing how to perform ablution, and how to remove impurities, and the pillars of the prayers (*as-salat*), and everything else that is obligatory upon you. You have to know the principals of the creed, such as, what is obligatory and commanded by Allah and what is prohibited. You must not busy yourself with more knowledge than these basics before you purify yourself, before you discipline your *nafs* and clean your heart. In the beginning your need is to free yourself from the prison of your nature and polish the mirror of your heart in order to remove its diseases, which prevent it from comprehending the realities of things and from understanding the subtle sciences. This is because in this station, your mirror is rusted by the rust of arrogance, conceit, boasting, hate, desire, greed and envy, and other blameworthy qualities that you do not recognize in yourself.

So the most important duty in this station is to rid the self from these impurities which prevent the heart from witnessing the unseen. This can be achieved by remembrance with energy and abundance, and by reducing your amount of food and sleep in order to narrow the passages of the *shayṭān*. This brings the heart closer to home by witnessing and experiencing the sun that manifests the reality of faith. This station, and I mean the first station, in which the soul is called the commanding *nafs* is referred to in the Qurʾān as nature's prison and the lowest of the low. So freeing one's self [from this station] is very important. This is why the heirs of the praiseworthy qualities (*al-wārithu-l-muḥammadī*) recommend abundant remembrance aloud to awaken the faculties from their heedlessness.

Therefore practice the remembrance and stand at the door of the Law (*ash-sharīʿah*) and bring the self to accountability every hour. And put fear into your soul by reminding it of death from which there is no escape,

and the suffering in the grave, and the terrors after it, and the torments of Hell because in this station the two states of fear and hope alternate.

When you cross this station, fear (*kḥawf*) changes into contraction (*qabḍ*), and your hope (*rajaḥ*) changes into expansion (*baṣṭ*). Then later, contraction will change to reverence (*kḥashya*) and expansion to intimacy (*uns*). And if you reach degrees of perfection, reverence becomes Might, and intimacy becomes Beauty. But in this station, and I mean the first, in which the soul is called the commanding *nafs* you must remember the reasons for fear because this is more beneficial to you than hope, unless your fear reaches the degree of despair – then you must remember the reasons for hope, such as the vast Mercy of Allah, His Forgiveness, and His Generosity.

You must surrender to Allah and beg Him, asking Him to grant you salvation by His Subtle Gentleness and Excellence (*ʾiḥsān*; spiritual virtue). Always invoke and implore Him abundantly, and do not grow weary from supplication. Do not say, “Allah does not accept my supplication” because this cuts the aspirant from the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*).

The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) said, “Prayer (*ad-duʿāʾ*) is the marrow (the essence) of worship,” and Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) says, “Call Me – I will answer you. But those who are too proud to worship Me will certainly enter Jahannam – disgraced.” [Q40:60-61]. Also, the Prophet of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) said, “To whomever [the door of] prayer is opened, the doors of response are opened also.” And he (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) also said, “Nothing revokes the decrees of destiny, except prayer.” And, “Prayer revokes the decree, and benevolence increases provision, and the slave is prevented from committing a sin because nothing is more noble to Allah than prayer.”

See, my beloved, how honorable man is to his Lord? His Lord allows his prayer and direction to influence His determined decree, and allows it to revoke affliction, and to be of avail for those calamities and afflictions that are sent down. Prayers are so honored by Allah that He becomes

wrathful when a person refrains from praying. He made it the essence of worship. This is a favor and an honor from Allah to mankind. Does it befit you then, after being given this high honor, to run toward His enemies, the devils (*ash-shayāṭīn*), and toward the lower world and its pleasures? Can you be satisfied by being revoked as these devils are, and being loathed as they are loathed, after you have knowledge of your potential as the best [in the whole creation] and that you are capable of the greatest vicegerency (*khalīfah*)?

Before you, your father Adam was honored when Allah ordered the angels to prostrate themselves to him, and they all did prostrate. Allah taught him all the names, and so Adam became vicegerent for Allah on the earth. Does what you run toward equate an atom's weight of that which you have turned your back on? Be alert, my beloved, and wake up from your heedlessness, which is causing your ruin and which abases and belittles you. Come forward to the One without Whom you cannot be sufficed. Come forward before you are led by the chains of trial; for He has informed you saying, "My slave, if you approach Me by a hand-length, I will approach you by an arm-length; and if you approach Me by an arm-length, I will approach you by a two arms-length, and if you come to Me walking, I will come to you running."

Therefore leave procrastination, and turn away from everything that distracts you from your Protector, your Lord, Allah, and be sufficed with what you have in your hands, whether it is plentiful or scarce. Abandon the ephemeral pleasures and busy yourself with what matters to you, and do not postpone repentance (*at-tawbah*), and do not delay coming forward to Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*); for you do not know how much of your life still remains. The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) said, "Leave what is doubtful for what is not doubtful; for you will never lose anything that you have left for Allah." He (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) also said, "Leave the lower world to its people; for whoever takes from it beyond what is enough for him, his death shall take him by surprise while he is heedless." This means that whoever pursues the

pleasures of the lower world earnestly and exceeding what is enough for him, he is, in fact, pursuing his own destruction, but he does not feel the destructive force yet.

My beloved, in this narrow and ugly station [of the commanding *nafs*], you must focus your prayer on freeing yourself from the constriction of the self to the vast realm of the spirit, and let your aspiration (*himma*) and your pursuit divest you of all the blameworthy qualities and adorn you with the praiseworthy character traits. Replace your pride with humility, your hate with love, and your ostentation with sincerity and faith. If you have fame among people and you like to have a high rank, beware of arrogance because its end is within the grave. Remember that all people are the children of Allah, and that the most beloved among them are the most beneficial to His children.

Know that if you busy yourself with freeing yourself and replacing your blameworthy qualities, you will witness some of the marvelous, concealed secrets that are treasured within the world of mankind. This is why I ask you: Do you think of yourself as the tiny microcosm, and yet within you the magnificent macrocosm is folded?

❦ ❦ ❦

The Blaming Self

an-nafs al-lawwāmah

An exposition of its walking, locus, state, its light or source of arrival (wārid) and its qualities and the remedies used to rid oneself of it and ascend to the third station.

What I mean by this station is the station in which the *nafs* begins to be inspired to walk to Allah. In this station, the soul's world is the barrier, or world of the interval between this world and the first heaven of seven heavens (*al-barzakḥ*). Its locus is the heart; its state is love; its source of arrival (*wārid*) is the way, and its qualities are blaming, conceit, boasting, criticism of others, hidden hypocrisy and the love of fame and leadership. Some of the traces of the commanding *nafs* remain, but in spite of this, it sees the truth as truth and falsehood as falsehood, and even though it knows that these qualities are blameworthy, it is not able to free itself from them. It has the desire to strive and to be in conformity with the Law (*ash-shrīʿa*) and performs some good deeds, such as, staying up the night to worship, fasting, giving charity, and other good deeds, but these are contaminated by boasting and hidden hypocrisy. The possessor of such a soul, conceals the good deeds and acts for Allah, but loves others to find out about those good deeds. He likes to be praised and thanked, but dislikes this quality and is unable to free his heart from it completely. If he does succeed in removing this quality from his heart, he will be sincere and also secure.

In this state, the faithful and sincere are still in great danger. The Prophet of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) said, "All people are ruined except the knowledgeable, and all the knowledgeable are ruined except the workers, and all the workers are ruined except the faithful and sincere, but the faithful and sincere are always in great danger." This is because Allah brings them to accountability in accordance to the inmost sincerity of their deeds. The faithful, sincere ones love their sincerity to be

known, so this amounts to a hidden hypocrisy; and acting for the sake of being praised by others is a hidden idolatry which is totally condemned.

Know that if you have this quality you are in the second station and your soul is called the blaming one. The possessors of this station are never safe from danger even when sincere in their deeds, as explained above. This is the second station of the journey of the ones brought near (*al-muqarrabūn*), [Q56:11; 83:21] the seekers who aspire to be annihilated (*fanā'*) from themselves and to subsist (*baqā'*) by their Lord. So they are commanded to die before their time; their Master, Allah says to them, "Die before you die." So they strive to die the death of the self with discipline and purification.

As for the righteous (*al-abrār*), who are the People of the Right Hand (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*), this is their highest dwelling and station. This is why it is said that, "The good deeds of the righteous are the bad deeds of the ones brought near" for the latter do not stop at this second station, but ascend from one station to the other until they reach to the seventh station. There are five more stations after this one. Know that the difference between the righteous and the ones brought near is that the latter are those who take the favor of their Lord completely and use their will to establish the rights of their Lord in slavery and servitude, seeking to please Him; whereas, the righteous, are those who stop with the favor [*i.e.* this station] and use their will for righteous deeds and to arrive at the station of certitude (*yaqīn*) to gain the reward of being raised in degrees for their struggle.

Know that the ones brought near do not stop at this station because of its great danger; they continue to strive for its highest degree which is the degree of sincerity and faith (*al-'ikhlās*). But the sincere ones are in danger and they cannot free themselves from this danger except by annihilating their witnessing of the sincerity by witnessing the Mover who is Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) through tasting (*dhawq*) and witnessing (*shuhūd*). This depends on the way they travel the road of those brought near, for the righteous cannot smell [even] its fragrance.

The Ones Brought Near acquire certitude (*yaqīn*) through evidential experience and through the unveiling (*kashf*) which Allah (*subḥānahū wata ʿālā*) [made possible through] prescribed rituals of worship. He made these acts doors through which those whom He wishes enter into His Presence. They thus enter through these doors to Him, surrendering between His hands, looking with insight, and not looking at the rituals, or depending on them, or admiring them because these rituals belong to the lower world. Thus, they bear witness that Allah is the Bestower of grace upon them; for He opens the doors of worship for them and enables them to enter, and makes them worthy of being accepted [by Him]. One whose state is like this is in no need of sincerity, and it does not even cross his mind because he does not perceive any deed belonging to himself, so he is sincere in his action and does not see any deed belonging to any other but Allah. Thus he feels annoyed by righteous masters because they have not yet arrived at this vision and they perceive themselves as the ones who brought their deeds into existence, so he asks them to free themselves [of this belief]. This is because they do not witness that Allah (*subḥānahū wata ʿālā*) is the Creator of all Actions and so they complain about some actions and fall into struggle and weariness.

Their situation reaches the extent that even if they entered a locked garden, Allah would decree someone [inside] to harm them. This is because they still have some human nature which demands boasting, conceit, envy, rancour, bad manners, enmity, hatred, and indulgence in seeking provision, *etc.* All of these yield weariness and struggle.

You must be given an example that shows you the difference between the righteous and the ones brought near and how the former are struggling and the latter are at rest. Suppose there is a large harmful tree with many branches. Each branch produces a deadly poison. Some people arrive and proceed to cut the branches, but they do not uproot the tree nor cut its water source so that they could be rid of it. In the end, they are not completely rid of the poisons, because they cut what does not grow by itself, and the original source of growth, which is the tree, remains.

On the other hand, another group of people arrive and they cut off the water supply to the tree so that its branches begin to weaken and do not produce any poison; so they get rid of the problem and put themselves at rest without the need to repeatedly cut the branches, which would prove impossible to completely get rid of the poison because when branches are cut others grow in their place.

The tree is a similitude of the hidden of the human being and the blameworthy qualities are like the branches. The poison is the outer effect of the [inner] blameworthy qualities. So the righteous, knowing that these qualities are destructive for the human in the lower world and in the final world, strive to gradually rid themselves of these qualities, but they are unable to be entirely rid of any of them ever; when they free themselves of one quality one day, another appears the next day and they continue like this until they die. This is because they feed their stomachs and strengthen their physical nature and their blood becomes more abundant so that *ash-shaytan* is able to take hold of them. The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) said, "The worst container that the child of Adam fills is his stomach. A few morsels are enough to energize his vigor. If he must [eat] then let one third [of his stomach] be for his food, one third for his drink, and one third for his breath," and he (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) also said, "Satan flows within any of you as your blood flows, so narrow his passages with hunger."

There is no doubt that if *ash-shaytan* is enabled within a person and flows where his blood is flowing, that person will be covered with blameworthy qualities and he will be unable to complete the removal of any of them; and even if he removes some of them temporarily, it is not permanent. This temporary removal happens only because of his fear when listening to the news of the states in the grave and the suffering therein, and when listening to the news of the Day of the Gathering which is the Day of the Standing for Reckoning. But when this fear subsides the unworthy qualities take over again after having been temporarily halted

because of his fear and admonishment about what will happen to him if he does not stop his disobedience and surrender to the orders of Allah.

As for the ones brought near, when they learn by proof and experience that the stomach is the source of corruption and the cause of the emergence of the unworthy qualities, they adorn themselves with the praiseworthy qualities. They decrease their food and drink, and reduce the amount of time that they sleep, and their talking decreases because one who is hungry and tired does not desire talking. So they seek solitude, and no unworthy qualities remain in their hearts. Those with realization [of the Truth] who are actualized by it (*al-muḥaqqiqun*) say, “The ones substituted or transformed (*al-abdāl*) do not become substituted or transformed except by hunger, lack of sleep, silence and solitude.”

If you have understood the previous example and know the difference between the righteous and the ones brought near, then you know that the latter is a group of people who have no blameworthy qualities such as boasting, conceit, envy, *etc.* They have erased these qualities from their root to the extent that they do not even think about them. This is why you see them void of depression and sadness and their hearts are at rest. All creatures love them and do not harm them because nothing but good emerges from them. In spite of this, there are some people who resentfully envy them, but they cannot harm them; whenever they try to do so, Allah protects them from the evil plot and transfers it to the chest of the cunning ones. The ones brought near may not even be aware of these envious ones trying to harm them. Allah suffices them and protects them from the distress of the lower world and the final world.

But if you are wondering if this [fact] contradicts some of the *ḥadīth*, such as the Prophet’s saying, “If the faithful locks himself in a grove, Allah will decree that someone harm him therein” and his saying, “The lower world is the prison of the faithful believer” and other *ḥadīth* like these, then the answer is that these sayings refer to the righteous (*al-abrar*); and you now know their states and that they are accepted by Allah; for they are the ones who are aware of Allah and guard themselves against

evil. They are people of *taqwā*, nonetheless, they are not entirely free from the distress of their selves, and therefore they are not without weariness in this lower world. However, Allah has promised to give them a generous reward in the final world.

As for the ones brought near, they are few. They are deeply drowned in witnessing the Real so that they forget the creation and they do not think of the pleasures of the lower world, nor the bliss of the final world. How, then, can they be harmed, distressed, captured or enslaved?

So, my beloved, if you want to persist in travelling their road to free yourself of all pain and to have continuous rest, then continue travelling and follow their traces by ascending from one station to the next until you arrive at the seventh station in which you will see marvelous realities. In fact, in each station, you will see what makes you rejoice, and what allures you to continue your journey. Ascension does not happen without striving and occupying yourself with the names. In each station, you will occupy yourself with a name that is specific to that station. As much as you are occupied by the name, the road is shortened for you; and in as much as you delay and neglect it, the road will be lengthened for you. So blame yourself alone. *Jihād* is an obligation and its reality is to abandon accustomed patterns of behaviors. The accustomed patterns cannot be counted; nonetheless, the heirs of the praiseworthy qualities (*wārith al-muḥammadī*) have determined pillars of the road and there is an obligation to establish these six pillars: 1) to decrease food; 2) to shorten sleeping time; 3) to minimize speech; 4) to isolate oneself from people; 5) to be in constant remembrance (*dhikr*); and 6) to contemplate Allah's Signs (*fikr*).

Out of these six pillars, there are some that might be meant more for you than others, and beyond these six are also accustomed patterns that must be changed, such as some friends and evil companions. But these six pillars are more important than all the others because if the traveller on the path to Allah establishes them with sincerity and faith, they transform him in a way that enables him to abandon all accustomed patterns. Balance and moderation are required to be between transgression (*tafriṭ*) and rigid

limitation (*ifrat*). This is why the people of the path are advised to decrease food, not abandon it. What is beneficial on this road is to eat only when hungry, and to not fill your stomach. So you can abandon the habit of eating a noon meal and night meal, and if you do not feel hungry at lunch time or at night time, you should not eat.

The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) used to omit the night meal if he ate at noon, and if he did not eat at noon he would eat at night. It is required to abandon eating several types of food together, and to not eat [the amount of] two meals at one time. This moderation can be difficult for the beginner; his self does not obey him, but he must oppress the *nafs* until it becomes satisfied with what we just mentioned. You can begin by minimizing your amount of food and by pushing yourself to do what you cannot bear, even though this is unfair, but one does not rectify and return the *nafs* to the Real and to lawful food [without applying the opposite extreme in order to bring balance]. But if one finds a change in his disposition, he must take rest because swinging moods corrupt the states and stations, especially if melancholy overcomes you because of hunger. Also if the traveller is ill he must stop striving until his disposition is rectified and when his illness disappears, he must resume his struggle. This is because sickness is one of the great obstacles.

In this station, you must occupy yourself with the second name, which is: Allah – Allah. You must put a *sukun* at the end of the word Allah and this is how you should also practice the remembrance of all the other names. This is what those who have realized the Truth and who have been actualized by it recommend. You must do this remembrance in abundance because it will not benefit you and will not manifest any of its marvelous effects except with frequent repetition. So you must remember the name Allah abundantly while standing, sitting, and lying down, even in the early morning and late at night. On your knees or standing are the most preferable positions for the remembrance. Assign a particular time for yourself where you sit facing the direction of the prayer (*al-qiblah*), if you can, and then close your eyes, and remember Allah by this Glorious name

with force and with a loud voice, and raise your head and do not turn right or left. Emphasize the *A* in Allah, and lighten the *h* at the end of the word (*sukun* at the end). You will not feel any effect if you do not put the stress on the *A* because you must actualize it and realize it.¹⁶

Know that in this station you have lots of thoughts, suspicion and evil suggestions, especially if you do the remembrance in a moderate tone, so do it loudly and not silently. If you remember with loudness and forcefully, then these thoughts decrease. This name is a Fire that burns all thoughts, suspicion and evil suggestions. Occupy yourself with the remembrance and pay no attention to the thoughts. Nonetheless, you will be unable to quickly free yourself from these thoughts because the mirror of your heart is directed toward the creation. There is no doubt that when the mirror is directed toward something, that thing becomes engraved upon it, and so the pictures of the creatures, their actions, their good, their evil, their motion, their silence and their speech will be engraved upon the mirror of your heart. However, you hate this and you try hard to discharge it, but it does not go away unless you turn away from all people and do not see any more of their pictures, or hear any of their speech, and you turn away from all the pleasures, so that you do not smell any of its odors, or taste or touch any of it. Then, nothing remains in your imagination. If you do not turn away from all of that, you will be clothed by these thoughts, doubts and evil suggestions, and you will suffer from them; for in this state you are veiled by the creation from the Real. If you are thirsty to be connected and to have direct divine communication (*wisal*), then abandon the creation and all its pleasures. This is the struggle (*mujāhadah*) that results from witnessing (*mushāhadah*).

¹⁶ The *sukun* in Arabic indicates silence and tranquility; the sign *sukun* is a little circle on top of the letter (â), which makes the sound of the letter uttered without a vowel.

Know that this path is the path of exerting effort and of striving; so strive and gain what you desire, and far beyond what you desire. Those who delay and neglect are obstructed on the road because there are many obstacles, the greatest of which is to find rest with people, feeling inclined to sit with them. Whoever does not obliterate these obstacles that obstruct the road will not arrive at what he pursues because the goal is to oppose what common people are accustomed to. So how can there be any hope to free yourself if you agree with people and indulge in their speech, joking, moods and the other characteristics of their gatherings? If you desire the exalted stations, turn away from people, forget all of your friends and family, and be wary of all people, until they claim that you are insane – then you will find intimacy (*uns*) with the Real and you will see wonderous [secrets], if Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*) so wills.

Exert serious effort and strive and discharge what remains within you of the traits of the commanding ego, such as conceit, envy, enmity, boasting and hypocrisy and of being cynical toward the servants of Allah, criticizing them inwardly and outwardly. You will not be able to completely free yourself of these qualities except by avoiding people and turning away from them, inwardly and outwardly, to the extent that you do not have to be commanding good and prohibiting evil, a well known teaching in the Islamic religion. This is because this duty requires gentleness, subtleness and humbleness toward the one commanded, and in this station you are not capable of doing this.

The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “Whoever commands what is acceptable to common sense, must command with the well known manners of common sense.” This is because what is important for your reality is to free the person [who you are commanding] from eternal destruction, but also to purify your own heart from the diseases that prevent it from witnessing the Real, because the heart is the locus of the Real’s sight. Thus purifying the heart is an individual obligation that must be fulfilled so that one witnesses Him and speaks to Him without the sensory.

Make your supplication for the purification of your heart as follows, "O Discharger of hearts, discharge my heart to obey You," and after its purification, "O One Who makes hearts return, turn my heart in accordance to Your way." You must perform this supplication at sunrise and at sunset. This means that Allah turns the heart from heedlessness to remembrance, and from laughter to weeping. The purpose of this supplication is to ask for uprightness and straightforwardness on this path and in this station, by which I mean the second station of the secret of his saying, "The hearts are between the two fingers of the Universally Compassionate manifest to you." He is your Provider Who makes you forget the pain of striving. So desire wayfaring [on the path to Allah] and abhor everything that is not Allah. If you do not do what you have just been advised to do, then you will see only weariness and suffering.

If something of this secret manifests to you without struggle, know that it is the ego claiming a perfection that the self does not yet have; for it is one of her characteristics to claim perfection just by hearing it. 'Umar Ibn al-Farid, one of the gnostics, said:

*Strive to witness within you and from you what I describe,
An [independent] tranquil quietness
from the existence of my tranquil quietness.*

Vision (*mushāhadah*) does not occur except with striving, so strive against yourself and bring forth the treasures that are within you. Do not accept triviality and mere verbosity; for whoever claims what he does not have, the proofs of trial will expose his lying. So put yourself on trial and do not believe the self and be the one who brings it to accountability. Scold and reprimand your *nafs* for everything in opposition to the way and be its enemy. Speak with your guide (*shaykh*) and do not hide anything of its ugliness from him because the more you gain from the secrets of this way, the most likely the benefit will be yours; but beware of arrogance and pretention (*al-ghurur*).

Be truthful in your quest for medicine, and strive until the wonders and secrets of the heart become unveiled for you and until you enter the World of Similitudes (*‘ālam al-mithāl*) which is a different world from the one in which you now live. No one knows it except the one in the station of the heart which is the end of the second station of the seven mentioned stations. It is the first station of the ones brought near, in which the wayfarer beholds the affairs that are not comprehended by the five senses because the heart of the faithful believer is the Throne of Allah and the House of Allah, which means it is the locus of the secrets of Allah.

Be a follower of the Divine Law which includes the sayings of the Prophet (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) created by the way and follow his actions – frequent hunger, little sleep and silence. Whenever the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) spoke, he spoke only good. Nonetheless, he was mostly silent. He would stay silent for long times and would laugh little.

Know, my beloved, that if you embody the ethics of the Prophet (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) and his states, and then act in accordance with this, the springs of wisdom will gush forth from your heart and tongue, and you will be travelling the path of the ones brought near, and so you will travel higher than the righteous and you will depart from them and travel to the Presence of the Mighty. Your first house in this journey will be the World of Similitudes (*‘ālam al-mithāl*) which contains all the imaginary pictures between the density of bodies and the subtlety of spirits. You will see what veils you, strengthen your *himmah* to travel, and increase your longing. The fire of love will ignite in your heart, discharging desires of the self and the *shaytan*. If any spiritual desire remains in you in this station, it is not harmful because what is required from you in this station is being cut off from the desires of the self, which are dark considering what is beyond them.

Know that entering the World of Similitude is only granted to the travellers on the path and it is a state that is intermediate between sleep and wakefulness, and it usually comes to the traveller while he is sitting,

and it is called the inevitable (*al-wāqiʿah*). In this state you see that your condition is that you know the place and time you are in, and you know that you are between sleep and wakefulness. If these conditions are not met, then it is only a dream and should not be counted [as vision]. Because this state is between sleep and wakefulness, sleep can overcome the traveller at the beginning, then he ascends until the wakeful state overcomes the sleeping state. In this state, he sees spirits and thinks he sees them in a state of wakefulness, but, in truth, he sees them in the spiritual world. Because his *himmah* is strong, this state is closer to wakefulness than to sleep, so he thinks of himself as awake. It is in this state that Jibrīl came to the Companions [of the Prophet] in the image of a Bedouin.

In this state, called similitude, the spiritual being of the Prophet (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) is seen, so that it is said that so-and-so saw the Prophet (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) and spoke to him face-to-face. This has an astounding effect that overwhelms the traveller until he is relieved from it.

In this world, the true *himmah* is to see the Real (*subḥānahū wa-taʿālā*) in the World of Similitudes. Iblis can confuse the traveller in this matter, so the traveller thinks that he sees the Real, but the truth is that he saw his *shayṭān*. If this [spiritual] vision is followed by knowledge, gnosis, following the Divine Law, and embodying the ethics of the way, then it is a generous honor from Allah to His slave and it comes by true and correct *himmah*. But if this vision is followed by an evil attitude, atheism, hypocritical holiness, and following low desires, then it is Iblis who comes to discharge the traveller from the way.

The Prophet (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) said, "I saw my Lord, Blessed and Glorified is He in the Best Image and He said to me: 'O Muḥammad! What are the High Assembly quarreling about?' I said, twice: 'O my Lord! You know best.' He then put the Palm of His Hand between my shoulders, and I found its coolness between my breasts, and I then knew what is within the heavens and the earth." The Messenger of

Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) then recited: “And in this way, We showed ʾIbrāhīm the Dominion (*malakūt*) [of Allah over] the heavens and the earth, that he might be of those who are certain.” [Q6:75]. Then Allah asked the Prophet again, “O Muḥammad! What are the High Assembly quarreling about?” And Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “About the expiation of sins? He said, “And what are the expiations of sins?” Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “Walking on foot to congregations, sitting in the mosques after prayers, and letting [the water of] ablution reach its place to clean the blemishes. Whoever does this will have a good life and will be cleaned of his sin, as clean as the day when his mother gave birth to him. To attain the high degrees, one should offer food, extend the greeting of peace and stay up at night in worship while people are asleep.” He said, “Say: O Allah, I ask You for goodness, to avoid the disagreeable deeds, and to be provided with good deeds, with the love of the poor. And I ask You to forgive me, bestow Your Mercy upon me, and accept my repentance, and if it is Your will to try people with distraction, let me not die distracted.” Indeed, Allah has spoken the truth, and so did His Messenger (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*).

This is the true *himmah* because it follows the knowledge of all the sciences and anything beyond this is no more than *shayaṭīn* persuasion or influence. This is because the purpose of this path is to attain Godly knowledge of the sciences which come as a result of self-cleaning and as a result of the purification of the heart. Only then the heart is inspired with Lordly knowledge. These inspirations must be in conformity with the Book and the Noble way of the Messenger (*as-sunnah*). The sign of the purification of the self is freedom from anger, conceit, envy, boasting and the hatred of some people while being biased toward others without right but only from selfishness. To the pure one, all people are equal, and he does not love them in a way that makes him inclined toward them more than toward the Truth. At the same time, he does not hate people in a way that changes his inner intention toward them and which would occupy him instead of being only occupied by the Real.

O traveller in this station, your greatest duty is to remove the lower desire for food and clothing. If anyone sees, within himself, a desire for one type of food over another, or for one type of clothing over another, then he must strive and reduce the amount of his food and clothing. But if all kinds of food and clothing become equal in his eyes, then it will be said that his self is purified and free of this evil. This is the first degree of perfection because perfection is of many degrees. In this first degree, the heart inclines more toward the holy world and the self turns away from the pleasures of the sensory world. But as long as the traveller is inclined toward his selfish lower desires and does not discipline himself with practices, then he is not one of the travellers on the path of the ones brought near. If he claims otherwise, then he is a *shaytān*, a confused one who has gone astray and confuses and leads others astray. The traveller must avoid such a person because it is feared that such a person will confuse them and lead them astray.

This is the path of opposing all the habits with which people have been afflicted. If one does not tear these habits from himself, then these habits will not be torn from him. You will not attain the high levels unless you turn away from the creation like a madman. As long as an iota of inclination toward people remains in your heart more than your inclination toward your Beloved and your Goal, then you will not attain these high degrees. Turn away from everything other than Allah, and do not sit [idly] with any human even if he claims that he is the perfect human. Inside the heart, wisdom is like a candle in a house that has five doors. If the doors are shut, the candle will remain luminous, illuminating the house with its light, but if the five doors open, then the candle is blown out and the house becomes dark.

Wisdom is like this inside the heart with the five senses. If the person inclines toward hearing sounds, and seeing what is visible, and smelling what has a fragrance, and touching what can be touched, and tasting what can be tasted, then wisdom hides and light is shut out and the heart is darkened. But if the traveller turns away from sensory things with the five

senses by practicing spiritual retreats and seclusion away from people, and if he discharges all the selfish low desires, then the springs of wisdom will gush forth out of his heart and on his tongue. This is the light referred to by the Prophet. He said, "If Light is sent down within a heart, it expands and widens it." It was said, "O Messenger of Allah, is there a sign for this?" And he said, "Yes, to be above the house of arrogance, to return to the house of eternity, and to be prepared for death before it is sent down." This [explanation comes from] the realization that there is a direction of the heart toward the visible world which is the world of the five senses because the heart cannot be conscious of anything in the visible world except through the five senses. On the other hand, the heart has a direction toward the world of the Dominion (*al-malakūt*).

If the heart is inclined toward the visible world through the five senses then it is turned away from the world of the Unseen. But if the heart turns away from the five senses, it is directed toward the world of the Unseen, and at the beginning of its journey to Allah the heart cannot be directed toward both worlds at the same time; if it turns toward one world, it will automatically turn away from the other; and the difference between the two worlds is great. This is because the visible world is at the farthest distance from the Presence of the Real, and if the heart is completely directed toward this world, it is completely absent from the world of the Unseen. In this case, it becomes the heart of an animal, and so you find that the person is a slave to selfish low desires and to anger, and you find that he sleeps a lot and backbites, and scandalizes others. These people always like to argue without calculating the consequence of the matter.

On the other hand, if a person is completely directed toward the world of the Unseen, by following the Commands and avoiding the Prohibitions, and by turning away from vain talk and from extra food and sleep, then he becomes attributed with praiseworthy qualities. This means that his anger and desires are under his control and he manages them as he wishes. He then becomes the perfect human (*'insān al-kāmil*), and, compared to others, he becomes the locus of the [Divine] Trust (*al-*

amānah). This is because between the human beings and the angels, anger and low desires are like a dense mirror for the common spirit. If the mirror has a dark dense face, images cannot be imprinted upon it, and similarly for the spirit, it cannot be the locus of the epiphanies unless anger and desire are in their praiseworthy perspective, kept away from transgression and under the control of the intellect (*al-‘aql*) and the [Divine] Law (*ash-sharī‘ah*). With these two qualities – anger and desire – the human being becomes ignorant and oppressive, but when he puts both of these qualities under the control of the intellect and the Law, these two qualities becomes a cause of [or the motive for] carrying the [Divine] Trust (*al-amānah*). “Truly We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and feared it, and the human being [undertook] it. But he has been an oppressor [of himself and others] and ignorant.” [Q33:72].

If you know this, then you know that if anger and desire are possessed and controlled by you, then you become the vicegerent (*khālīfah*) referred to when Allah says, “I shall place upon the earth a vicegerent.” [Q2:30]. On the other hand, if you are owned by anger and desire, then you will become an animal in human form. In fact, in this case, animals are considered better than you because animals are not obligated with duties and they do not face suffering in the grave or in Hell. So, exert your utmost effort, strive and practice hunger, silence, contemplation, remembrance and seclusion from people. Then, you will be able to control your anger and your desires, and your chest will expand, and you will not experience any distress or depression; only then will your burden that bent your back be lifted, and nothing from your physical senses, which demand what is sinful, will remain. You will have eternal happiness in the end, and your reputation will be raised so that your enemies will revere you, and you will be saved from their cunning plots. In this way, you attain happiness in the lower world as well. Whoever is in this state is in the second station, which is not without boasting and conceit. These two qualities are the two causes of anger because anger is

a potential fire within the heart, like hot charcoal under ashes. Conceit brings out anger, for conceit is a quality of the ego-self that emerges out of seeing the self. So conceit is the reality of boasting.

As for arrogance toward others, it is the outer effect of the quality of anger because it emerges out of seeing the self that overcomes the possessor to an extent that cannot be controlled by the intellect nor by [outwardly obeying] the Law. So the wayfarer becomes like one who cannot help himself and his outer appearance becomes ugly, and there is no doubt that his inner image is uglier. It is possible that anger is the fire from which Iblis was created because the Prophet (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) said to ʿĀʾisha when she became angry, “Your *shaytān* has just arrived.” ʿĀʾisha asked, “And you? Do not you have one?” He said, “Yes, indeed, but I have invoked Allah in my supplication, so He has helped me to overcome him, and so he (*ash-shaytān*) has submitted, and he does not command me but to goodness.”

Allah has placed this quality [*i.e.* anger] in the human being from His wisdom, but when it is kindled for any [false] reason, the blood boils within the heart, and spreads within the veins, and rises to the upper part of the body, and then it pours into the face, so that the face appears red if anger is toward one whose rank is less, and yellow if anger is toward one whose rank is higher out of reverence toward him. The Prophet (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) disapproved of anger in many *aḥādīth* like the one just mentioned. So, whoever seeks salvation, let him free himself of this ugly quality, of which no one with a minimum of contemplative ability approves. So you must cut its substance by its root, and by that I mean uprooting conceit and boasting; and you know that these qualities cannot be completely removed except by travelling the path of the ones brought near, by exhausting the self with hunger, sleeplessness, silence, seclusion, and by turning away from its habits and illuminating it with remembrance, and by contemplation and reflection, *etc.* Also, treat anger by contemplating the meanness of your self and its weakness, knowing that whoever has such an inferior quality has no right to be arrogant

toward another. Know the reward of suppressing anger and frighten yourself with knowledge of Allah’s punishment and painful suffering. Know that Allah has more power over you than you have power over yourself; so you must warn yourself of the consequences of anger. When you feel angry at someone and you take revenge, there is no doubt that this person will become your enemy and will prepare to take revenge on you, even though he may be weaker than you at the time. These thoughts, and fear and stress will occupy your heart; it would have been sufficient for you to have been clement during your anger so that you could have rested from these thoughts and from this distress, and you would have resembled the prophets and the messengers, even though you would have reached endurance and forbearance rather than complete clemency.

The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “Surely knowledge is attained by education, and clemency by endurance. Whoever chooses good is given it, and whoever guards himself against evil is guarded.” So, if anger attacks you, seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Iblis. He (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) also said, “O Allah, Lord of Prophet Muḥammad, forgive my sins and take away the anger in my heart, and shelter me from the confusing attractions that lead me astray.” If you find yourself in a state of anger, then stand if you were sitting, and if you were standing, then sit down. The Prophet (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “Anger is embers in the heart. Do you not see how the jugular vein of an angry one swells and how his eyes becomes red? So if any of you find something like that within himself, you must sit if you are standing, and you must stand if you are sitting. If your anger does not go away, you should perform ablution with cold water, or you may take a shower, for nothing can put out embers except water.”

One of the Prophet’s supplications was, “O Allah, enrich me with knowledge, and adorn me with clemency, and honor me with *taqwā*, and beautify me with vigor.” So, my beloved, look with the eyes of fairness at the difference between anger and clemency, and choose that with which it is best to be attributed. This is because it is your duty to perfect yourself,

to clean and purify your heart, and to polish your mirror. Remove all of the blemishes and corruption so that your heart is allowed to be and so that you become a true human being. Use these prescribed medicines and heal your noble essence, to free it from psychological disease, which is greater than physical disease.

The most beneficial medicine is to remove conceit and boasting from your soul (*nafs*). This is because by removing them, anger is removed as well because they are its source. There is a medicine to cure the emergence of temporary anger, but its source, which is conceit and boasting, still remains. Conceit and boasting are not removed except by cutting their supply, which is the filling of the stomach, [*i.e.* its root]. So strive against yourself with hunger and sleeplessness to free your soul from anger and its branches, such as rancour (*hiqd*) and resentful envy (*hasad*). This is because resentful envy is the result of rancour, and rancour is the result of anger. Thus resentful envy is a branch of anger through envy, and all are blameworthy qualities. The Prophet (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “Resentful envy eats the reward of good deeds, just as fire eats wood.” The reality of resentful envy is hating Allah’s bestowal of favor upon another, so that the resentful envier wishes for the worldly or spiritual gift to be removed from another. Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*) says, “Many of the People of the Book wish that, after you have come to belief, they could make you to be among those who cover up the Truth. They do this due to envy (*hasad*).” [Q2:109].

Know that resentful envy is the result of anger, but it has other causes such as the love of leadership and the cunning evil of the ego-self. If the one who is resentfully envious knew the harmful effect of this quality in the lower world and in the final abode, he would immediately stop and he would surrender to his Lord and become one of the righteous. The suffering of the one who is resentfully envious is exposed to Allah’s wrath, and he will continue to suffer in the Final World.

Know that the diseases of the self are many and no one can discharge them all except the truthful, sincere ones among the travellers on the path to Allah, the ones brought near. This is achieved by striving against the self and by seeking the aid of Allah to struggle against the *nafs*, and against the *shayṭān*, and against anyone who divides the road of the travellers to turn them away from their Lord, whether they are a human, a *jinn* or a *shayṭān*. Almost everything in existence divides the traveller with jealousy and anger from the Presence of his Lord. This is because *shayṭān* knows that whoever travels the path with truthfulness and sincerity, will be the vicegerent who rules over them. Whoever arrives at that state is Praised. So resentful envy and rancour harm only their possessors.

It is the traveller's duty to not pay attention to anything, and to not fear any of this because Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) is nearer to him than anything else; he must not move an inch except by Allah's Permission and Power because He is the Best Knower of the inmost secrets of the hearts and of the unseen, and nothing in the earth or in heaven is hidden from Him. Allah is more merciful toward you than your own mother, and nothing comes from Him except pure goodness. The evil that is seen is only evil in relation to the outer appearances; if you look to its inner reality with the eyes of realization, you will see that everything is pure goodness. It is only named evil because it is unsuitable for some natural characteristics, but at the same time, it may be suitable for other natural characteristics. This is why the People of Realization said that goodness is decreed first by the Essence of True Being, but evil is decreed second by the display of temporary harm. But before the traveller looks at this magnificent secret, first let him exert his utmost effort and strive to purify his heart so that he sees [this secret] with insightful vision and experienced taste.

When you know this, then you have gained the knowledge of four things:

- 1) Knowledge that there is nothing beyond the power of Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) and nothing is difficult for Him;
- 2) Knowledge that Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) has full knowledge of everything;
- 3) Knowledge that Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) is the Most Gentle and is more Merciful than all those who are merciful; and
- 4) Knowledge that all the Actions of Allah are absolute goodness.

Whoever knows these four things and believes in them will not fear the resentful envy of the envious ones, and will not be terrified of anyone among the humans or among the devils. My beloved, you must contemplate the meaning of these four things and direct yourself completely [toward Allah] without paying attention to anything else that does not concern you. Your realization that Allah has power over everything should increase your aspiration (*himma*) to direct yourself completely toward Him, asking only Him, having certitude that He will respond. Asking in this way is never turned down. Your realization that He (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) has knowledge of everything, and that He is the Most Gentle and the Singularly Merciful, and that all of His Actions are pure goodness actualizes the station of reliance (*tawakkul*) for you, as well as, the station of satisfaction, longing (*shawq*), and love (*maḥabbah*), and other stations of the way in which you experience satisfactory and pleasing states. And this helps you to ascend even further.

As for the third station, in which the soul is named the inspired self (*an-naḥs al-mulḥammah*), this is the station through which the soul ascends to the secure, tranquil soul, and then to the satisfied soul, and to the pleased one, and finally to the perfect soul.

Know that Allah has made it a rule that the ascent of the soul from the second station to the third station occurs only at the hand of the gnostic guide who knows the stations of the way, its states and conditions.

Nonetheless, it is possible for Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) to change His rule, in an exceptional case, to allow one with intelligence and understanding to ascend without a guide. This happens when the traveller seeks Allah's help, and follows what Allah commands, and when he understands what is within His Book, and follows the Messenger's way (*as-sunnah*), and adorns himself with the ethics of the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*).

However, ascending from the third station to the fourth station cannot happen except with the breath of the Perfect Man (*'insān al-kāmil*) because the third station is the most difficult and most dangerous one; it is the station that unites good with evil, and benefit with harm, so that reality and falsehood can be confused, as well as sanctimony (*zandaqah*) and actual realization (*taḥqīq*) – unless worship and following the Divine Law become his ethics, and he is noble with good potential, and he is sincere in his original quest, and he has aspiration (*himmah*), and he has piercing and sound thinking, and is close to unveiling; for only then he truly sees the Real as real and falsehood as falsehood.

The danger of the third station will be clarified for you. As for the ascent from the fourth station to the fifth station, and to the sixth and the seventh station, know that the travellers, except for a few of them, do not need a guide. This is because Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) kindles, within the heart, a lamp from the Glowing Source of Perfection by which the traveller sees all of the perfect qualities. Nonetheless, his arrival to these stations depends on his *himmah* and on the granting of success that comes as a favor from Allah. You now know that the fourth station is a station of perfection, even though it is the lowest level of perfection.

“Truly We created the human being in the best of form. Then We reduced him to the lowest of the low – except for those who faithfully believe and do righteous deeds – theirs shall be a reward unfailing.”

The Inspired Self *an-nafs al-mulḥammah*

An exposition of its walking, its world, locus, states, light or source of arrival (wārid) and qualities and the remedies used to rid oneself of it and ascend to the fourth station.

In this station, its walking is upon Allah, which means that the wayfarer does not open his eyes except to look at Allah, the Exalted, because the manifestation of the reality of faith has permeated his inner being, everything other than Allah, the Exalted has become extinct in his vision.

The world of the inspired self is the World of Spirits, and its locus is the spirit. Its state is ardent penetrating love (*‘ishq*), and its light or source of arrival (*wārid*) is gnosis (*al-ma‘rifa*). Its qualities are: generosity, satisfaction, knowledge, humbleness, patience, clemency, enduring harm, pardoning people and encouraging them to become pious, accepting their excuses and seeing that Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*) is holding everything by the forelock. [see Q11:56]. So the traveller has no objection to any creature. Among some of the qualities of the inspired soul are: yearning, bewilderment, weeping, and contraction (*qabḍ*) and expansion (*baṣṭ*). In this station, fear and hope are absent, and there is pleasure in the beautiful chanting of remembrance and delight in listening to it and rejoicing in Allah. It speaks with wisdom and knowledge and there are visions.

The Inspired Soul is called thus because the Real (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*) inspires it with both righteousness (*taqwā*) and corruption (*fujur*) and it has begun to hear, without intermediary, the whisperings of the angel and those of the *shaytān*, whereas in the previous station it heard nothing because it was still close to the degree of the animals. Because of this hearing, this station is seriously dangerous and difficult and the wayfarer needs a guide who can keep him away from the layers of dark

ambiguities and direct him toward the Light of the epiphanies (*tajalliyyāt*). In this station, the traveller's state is weak and cannot distinguish between Beauty and Majesty nor between what the angel suggests to him and what *shaytān* insinuates. This is because he is not altogether free of his lower nature and what it demands. It is feared that if he is heedless of himself, he will fall into Sijil, the Lowest of the Low [see Q95:4-6], by which I mean back to the first station where the self is called commanding". He would then return to his old patterns of excessive sleeping and eating and indulging with people. This may corrupt his faith and he may abandon obedience and commit sins, and then still claim that he is a man of the unity (*tawhīd*) to whom things have been unveiled and he may claim that others who strive in obedience are veiled from this witnessing.

If his belief becomes corrupted like this, he will be destroyed with the rest of those who are ruined and he will join those who cover up the Truth and the polytheists. At this point, the fire of his lower nature will rise within his heart and intellect (*fu'ad*) and will burn all the faith (*'imān*) that is in his heart. His efforts and suffering will be wasted and he achieves none of his desires; on the contrary, he becomes a devil [or an evil one] who is confused and astray and who confuses others and leads them astray. Satanic imaginations flash to him in glimmering ways and he takes them for Compassionate epiphanies. This occurs after his human nature has weakened and his spirituality has become stronger, and after distress was removed from his heart and his relief was brought closer, and after there was only a little remaining for him to enter the Presence of the Mighty Sovereign, and after the good news of unity came to him and he was able to strive for [his goal] and to abstract [or become divested by] Reality.

The reason for this disaster which afflicts the traveller as he comes closer to the station of perfection is that he is still not remote from the first station where the soul is named the commanding ego; and when because of his practices (*riyādāt*) and self-discipline (*mujāhada*) some of the veils

are removed, the fear associated with them also disappears. These veils prevented him from committing sins and encouraged him to obey. On the other hand, his reduced fear does not encourage him to follow the Law. This is why it is said, "O beloved, you must follow the guide who helps you to travel who is the inheritor (*wārith*) [of the praiseworthy qualities], and if your ego suggests to you that you have ascended higher than him and that you are in unity and he is veiled, then you must follow the Law and abide by the rules of courtesy more than ever. You also must make it an obligation upon yourself to recite your *al-awrād* (pl. of *wird*) and restrain yourself with the binding of the *ṭarīqa*. This may become difficult for the soul because it is in a station in which it inclines to irresponsible liberty, making excuses, and carelessness.

What is required is to oppose the self until it is secured by the arrival of the fourth station in which the soul is named the secured, tranquil soul. In this station it finds happiness in the two abodes. In this world and the next it finds what delights the eye. When the traveller sets his foot in this station, he is freed by the Help of Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) from all of the diseases of the soul because he has ascended to the first degree of perfection where the gentle breezes of Divine proximity and the direct connection and communication (*wisal*) [with Allah] are whiffed upon the soul and so that it transforms from mutability to mastery.

O seeker of perfection! Rise up and abandon the frivolities of the ego. Beware of becoming arrogant because of what has appeared to you of unification (*tawḥīd*), and do not let this be the cause of your return or obstruction in your quest of lofty goals, but seek help in tearing whatever luminous veils still remain, and seek the Presence of the Singularity. Do not turn in your way to the lofty flashes because they are [the luminous] veils that prevent you from approaching the Highest Essence. These flashes may be the cause of your return to the level of the animals; so continue exerting the same efforts that led you to arrive to where you are now and to revelation. Free yourself from this danger and your revelation will continue.

In this station, continue to do what you used to do: continue to keep night vigils by reducing your sleep and decreasing your food, minimizing your speech and secluding yourself from people. Hold firmly to the garment of your guide, if he is one who is perfect, and you will attain his qualities. You must inform him of all of your thoughts, whether they are good or bad. As much as your belief in him increases, your attraction to the World of Sanctity (*'ālam al-quds*) will increase, weakening the pull of your human nature.

In this station, you may think that you have more knowledge than your *shaykh*, but by thinking this way, you will deprive yourself of the supply of his spiritual assistance (*madad*). Therefore expel this suspicion; for when you recognize him as perfect, then you enter his care with the *himma* to be freed by his hand; and so you must endure the pain of his [medicine], and be as a dead corpse in the hands of the washer. Beware of being critical of any of his states, and if you doubt something, then repent from this doubt. Sometimes you may find something that causes your doubt, for example, you see him reproaching his servant for breaking something of no value, or you see him showing annoyance at the loss of that thing. In this case, you must expel any doubts because the states of the Perfect are not measured by the same scales as those of others, and none but Allah (*subhānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) knows his inner reality.

If it does not become easy for you to verify the authenticity of a perfect guide, then you must heal yourself by following the Law, and you must abide by reciting the *al-awrād* of the Prophet (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*). Pray abundantly upon the Prophet (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*), always seek forgiveness, and accompany the righteous when you are in danger and the evil in your soul overpowers the good.

But if the good in your soul overcomes the evil, then be at ease and rejoice in the expansion (*bast*), and remove the fear which is a barrier between you and your *shaykh*. Remove all otherness, all thoughts and pictures that veil you from your *shaykh*. This is why Allah (*subhānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) says, "Turn away from those who abandoned Our

remembrance and did not want but the life of this world.” [Q53:29]. Instead, in this station, befriend those whose quest is in conformity with yours.

This third station is one in which both good and evil are gathered. So that if the good overcomes the evil of the traveller’s self then it will ascend to the high stations, but if the evil overcomes the good then it will fall into the prison of the lower nature and descend to the lowest of the low. Then the traveller must accuse the self, and scold and belittle it with discipline. The sign that good is overcoming evil in your soul is that you see your inner being filled with the reality of faith (*‘īmāniyah*) and your outer being is filled with the Law of self-submission [to the Will of Allah]. This means that your inner being has realized that everything in existence moves in accordance with the Will of Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*) and by His Decree, Blessed and Glorified is He. On the other hand, your outer being must be in obedience, avoiding all major sins and most of the minor sins, whether they are sins related to your relationships with people or sins you earn when you are in a retreat. This is the sign that good has overcome evil.

As for evil overcoming good, the sign of this is that the traveller’s vision of the reality of faith increases, but some of his human nature remains. In such case, his outer being is not in conformity with the [Divine] Law and he will abandon devotions so that he may, unsurprisingly, commit disobedience. This is because when his vision of Reality is strengthened, and he sees that his actions are flowing in accordance to the Will of Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*), he is veiled by the lights of the reality (*al-ḥaqīqah*) from the secrets of the [Divine] Law. He is consequently driven from the door of the Presence that unites both opposites. In other words, he becomes veiled from witnessing the Real when he stops with the flashes (*lawā’ih*) that are in conformity with his disposition. He then loses both his world and his religion. So his evil continues to overcome his good, and he becomes a *zindīq* – one who rejects religion, and does not distinguish between human and animal.

I will strike an example that will help you to free yourself from the evil of this station in which you witness the overwhelming Reality, but fail to see the complete truth of the [Divine] Law. On the contrary, it is by this vision that you should be able to know that the [Divine] Law is the inner aspect of Reality and its secret. This is the opposite of what you have misunderstood by reading some books and by hearing the speech of some people. And this example will [also] reveal how Reality is the inner aspect of the Law, and its secret.

Assume there is a master who built a great house and within that house he put everything that a human being needs from the pictures of the lower world and the final world. He put all good and evil in this house and assigned a door for each type of good. He then informed his servant: It is my way to not let a certain type of good emerge from any door except this particular door. He also assigned a door for every type of evil and informed his servants of that. In other words, he assigned a door for good, a door for water, a door for flesh, a door for friends, a door to see him, a door to demonstrate his satisfaction, and a door to demonstrate his wrath, *etc.* He assigned limitless and countless doors. He then sent his servant as a messenger to explain the assigned doors to people so that they could take from what was within the house. He sent him to give them the good news that whoever stands in front of the doors that are assigned for good and asks for it, shall get what the master assigned for that door, and that his master would be pleased with him. He also sent him to warn them that whoever stands in front of the doors of evil and asks for it shall have what the master has assigned for those doors, but that the master would be angry with him.

One of the servants came and stood in front of the door of good, a standing of someone who is humble and insignificant, and he asked the master, himself, to favor him from his generosity; he did not see the doors as doors, but looked at the master as the very essence of these doors. In this way, he did not ask for mere pleasure, and seeing the doors did not veil him from witnessing his master, and humiliating himself with

begging. At the same time, he did not pay attention to any of the other doors, or ask for their gifts, because he did not want to be impolite or to forsake what the wisdom of the master demands. These servants are the ones brought near to the master. They are his beloveds because they put everything in its right perspective.

The second type of servants did the same as the first, but when they stood in surrender to the master's command, they began to admire themselves and saw that they were better than the ones who did not surrender to the master's commands. The master sensed that they were veiled, and he gave out the good he assigned for them, but did not bring them closer to his presence, in the way he did with the first type of servant.

As for the third type of servants, they did not stand in front of the doors, and so the master did not give out what he had assigned for them because they thought that the doors had no influence whatsoever or that there were no doors at all; for [they said] the giver is the master without a door and without a demand of any wisdom. So the master discharged them from his presence because of their ignorance of his wisdom, and because they did not stand by his door, and even though they claimed that they loved him, he disliked them. Therefore servants are of three categories: those who witness the master giving through a door he assigned from his favor; those who witness the same thing, but also witness themselves; and those who do not witness anything except the master.

Know that the master is an imaginative comparison with Allah (*subhānahū wa-ta ʿālā*), yearning for reunion and rejoining the Beloved, remembering the meetings with the Beloved, and rejoicing at the beauty of the face of the Beloved strengthens the traveller in his walking; especially if he sees himself retreating, then his heart breaks and his weeping increases. How beautiful is this road and how beautiful are its states! How lofty is the station of its travellers and how many are the gifts bestowed upon them! If they are in poverty, they are self-sufficient, and if they humiliate themselves, they are honored. Their assets are humiliation

and poverty and manifesting their helplessness, indigence and slavehood to Allah, their Beloved and Creator.

Know, my beloved, that while you are in this subtle and gentle station, the sun of direct experience has arisen upon you, and the good news of perfection is approaching you, and the breeze of the divine reunion is blowing upon you. Most of the dense veils have been removed from your heart and the uglier and most serious traits of your ego-self have also been removed. This is because this is the station of the spirit, and even though the spirit is still veiled from witnessing the Beauty of the Real, and still has its share of what prevents arrival to His Presence, these veils are luminous veils and acceptable desires. They seek to see the Real and ask for vision and reunion, because of the overwhelming love and longing and the bewilderment in love that demands asking for something before its suitable time.

This is the station of the passionate lovers delighting in humility and neediness, of the impatient lovers who are unable to bear separation from their Beloved. So throw away constraint, do not pay attention to being shamed by people, and seek to lower your status in the eyes of people by always changing companions, so that people do not pay particular attention to you, and you are not of special value or regard to them and they do not remember you. It is in this way, that the passionate lovers rejoice in ecstasy, and this is the sign by which the truthful are distinguished from the liars; for those who claim love are many, but the truthful ones are few. The one who is truthful in love has nothing in his heart but his Beloved; he has forgotten all creatures and they do not cross his mind. If they do not cross his mind, he will not cross their minds.

Know, my beloved, that one of the conditions of love is to surrender to the demands of the One Who is loved. This is why, one of the lovers said:

*You disobey God while claiming to love Him,
[I swear] by my life, this is horrible behavior;*

*If your love were true, you would obey Him,
For surely, any lover is obedient to his beloved.*

Beware of slipping on the path, thinking that throwing off constraint means abandoning the commands of the *sharī'ah*, as some confused people think. Those people have gone astray and are leading others astray. They are deviants (*zanadīq*) and have no true knowledge of Reality (*al-ḥaqīqah*) nor of the Law (*ash-sharī'ah*). They abandon the ritual praying and the fasts, and they do not give charity, instead, they follow their appetites and act in disagreeable ways, and in spite of all of this, they still claim to be people of *tawḥīd* and lovers of the Presence of the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*). Struggle against them, for they have departed from the circle of the Truth and turned away from every religion sent by Allah upon His messengers.

Beware, my beloved, and do not be overwhelmed by the vision of *shaytān*. Beware of doing anything in opposition to the Law, claiming in that way to be humbled in the eyes of people. Do not try to be humble by sin because this is a blameworthy action and is the cunning plot of *shaytān* to end your quest. This is because a characteristic of prohibited action is the darkening of the heart and when the heart is dark, things will not be seen the way they are in Reality.

So, even if you were truthful in seeking that which might eliminate your fame in the eyes of people, you must still follow what is permissible by the Law. If you seek, you will find many actions, more numerous than sand particles, that will help you reach this goal [of humbleness], and you will clearly see that there is no need for any prohibited action, which when you perform it, it corrupts what you have been striving to reach. Our goal is to guide you to know how to rectify your current affair, and to benefit you in a way that will enable you to cross the obstacles that prevent you from arrival, so that you can walk the remaining part of the road [safely]. The legal ways of throwing off constraint are made to remove the

obstacles that prevent you from meeting your Beloved. The obstacles are many, but to put aside the Law by lifting all constraint is not the right way.

Having luxurious clothes can be considered an obstacle because this demands of whoever is afflicted with this habit to try to have them, even through deception and fraud. This obstructs the person from reaching his Beloved. If they throw off constraint and wear whatever is at hand and easily obtainable, and concentrate instead on their Beloved, this will be a benefit of this condition. In this light, you can measure everything that prevents you from the Presence of Nearness, and everything that turns the face of the traveller away from the Mighty Proximity of the Lord.

Know, my beloved, that in this station, stopping the making up of excuses is not as hard as it is in other stations because this is the station of the deep passionate love and it is easier for a person in this station to stop making excuses. This was not mentioned in the previous station and it will not be mentioned in the next station because there is particular advice in every station. How joyous it is to do things in a legally sanctioned way! How illuminating and rewarding! How acceptable it is for those who possess sound intellects, even though it may anger the foolish and the insolent.

Know that when you completely stop making excuses, your ego, which obstructs you from the Mighty Proximity of the Real, dies. Then you may hear spiritual voices (*rūḥānīs*) that command or prohibit. Do not pay attention to them. “Leave them alone, recklessly speculating and playing,” [Q70:42] and do not allow their speech to increase your joy or sorrow because their purpose is to divert you from your quest so do not occupy yourself, except with your Beloved. It is better for you to hear nothing, and it is most important for you to not listen because these things may stop you in your journey. You may hear something that you have never heard before and you may think that you have reached the end of your quest; your aspiration (*himma*) may then abate and you may return to your lower nature. This is one of the dangers of this station, so beware of it; and ask your Lord to help you to overcome whatever obstructs your

path to Him, for to your Lord is your final end. Do not stop with anything except Allah, and seek His help, and do not become arrogant because of what has been revealed to you. If you become arrogant then you will be diverted from striving after it has become one of your qualities and your ethics, and after it has become easy for you. Your goal is invaluable, priceless, and very lofty, but it has many dangers, and no one can arrive, except those whose *himmah* is great, and no one is guided to it, except one whose will [to arrive] accompanies him in all the stations.

In this station, the state of annihilation (*fanāʾ*) comes to you to help you ascend from this station to the fourth station in which the soul is named the tranquil, secure self (*an-naḥs al-muṭmaʾinnah*). Annihilation (*fanāʾ*) is a state that comes to the traveller to make him absent from everything that can be intellectualized (*i.e.* all sensory things). It is a type of absence caused by absorption, not by fainting or sleeping. Every sense continues to sense, but it is affected; as if it is unconscious but conscious at the same time! For example, the eye is distracted from what is visible despite actually seeing it. The state of the traveller becomes like a man who is afflicted by blindness, and as he passes a friend, he looks at his face but does not greet him. When asked: "Why do you pass by me without greeting me?" He answers: "By Allah, I did not even see you because of my affliction!"

Similarly, the ear will hear sounds, but it is as though it does not hear; and so it is for all the other senses. Even the intellect will be unaware of its contents. This is a state very well known, but only by those who actually experience it. And this is why one of the gnostics said, "My Lord stopped me and He drowned me with a gnosis that is not the opposite of ignorance. For knowledge that is the opposite of ignorance is ignorance." This annihilation is the first annihilation; the second annihilation occurs in the fifth station where the soul is named the contented and pleasing self, or the satisfied soul (*an-naḥs ar-rāḍiyah*). As for the third annihilation this occurs when all the *human attributes* disappear in the Level of Singularity as was explained before when we identified the Real

Certitude. This third annihilation is the very essence of subsistence in existence (*baqā'*) as was said. So the traveller annihilates, then annihilates, and then annihilates until his annihilation becomes his vigorous existence.

Know that in the state of the first annihilation, you hear the speech of the spirituals (*rūḥānīs*) [the angels and the *jinn*], but not with your sense of hearing, and you do not understand what they say. When the state of annihilation subsides, and you return to your senses, you understand what they said through wisdom. I refer to this secret by his (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) saying, "Whoever sincerely devouts himself to Allah for forty mornings, springs of wisdom will gush forth from his heart and upon his tongue." These spiritual voices are called the ringing of the bell. "O Allah! You Who gives when asked! Favor me and do not deprive me or deprive the lovers [of this extinction]. Do not make our share of it be suffering, and do not let our fortune be with ourselves. Do not let this world be our preoccupation, nor the limit of our knowledge. Drive from us everything that obstructs us from reaching You." If you repeat this [sincerely], asking for this annihilation (*fanā'*), then you will experience this state.

There are six causes that allow the traveller on the path to attain this state [of extinction], and by which the transformed ones (*al-abdāl*) were transformed: remembrance (*dhikr*), contemplation (*fikr*), hunger, night vigils, silence and seclusion. The most effective cause of these six is hunger. Therefore, O seeker of this annihilation, do not leave any of your practices, but strive in this station to do them, even when you find them difficult, and do not forget their benefits. Do not be deceived and become arrogant by what appears to you of the flashes (*bāriqāt*), which you may not be able to discern whether they are divine or *shayṭānic*. You now know that this third station is the locus of confusion and the traveller on the path cannot distinguish between the inspiration which comes from the angel and that which comes from Iblis.

Once a gnostic was asked, "Now that you have reached Allah, why are you still holding onto your [prayer] beads?" He replied, "I will not

abandon that which brought me to my Beloved." So do not be deceived, O traveller, nor become arrogant by what appears to you, and do not abandon those things which you have come to know to be pure and good; for it helps you, by Allah's assistance, to walk the difficult parts of the path. The ego is your enemy, so do not feel secure with it, even when you arrive at the high stations. You must persevere in self-discipline and your practice; and strive so that your love (*'ishq*) may increase, and your bewilderment in love may be strengthened, and you may rejoice in your state of ecstasy by your intoxication and longing.

Do not throw off the restraint of the *sharī'ah* and beware because the station of passionate love is the station of intensive delight for the lover to the extent that he may not desire to ascend further even though this ardent love is a veil between him and the One for Whom he has passion, [*i.e.* the Beloved]. This is because the impassioned one does not want to free himself of the sorrow, distress and grief caused by ardent love (*'ishq*). On the contrary, he asks for the continuation of this state.

A most authentic impassioned one said:

*If my survival is in my annihilation from Your annihilation,
Then, my heart does not desire a house in which is my alienation.*

The state of passionate love (*'ishq*) is acceptable to the impassioned lovers, even though, compared to the states that are higher, it is blameworthy. So that when the perfect one (*al-kāmil*) remembers that state of ardent love and its days, he regrets how he threw off constraints and was careless. But with effort (*mujāhadah*) and self-discipline (*riyāḍah*) this state becomes sincere, and its possessor is truthful in whatever love poetry he produces. So, if he speaks, he speaks with passion, and he moans because of what emerges within his heart and for his lack of effort and practice. On the other hand, the one who does not practice or make any effort is not sincere or truthful, and his state is a deceitful state, and he is a liar, and his poetry is tasteless and has no effect

on the hearts of others and it is repulsive to the ears. The most authentic impassioned one, 'Umar ibn al-Fariḍ, informed us about these liars:

*A group of people were exposed to fondness but they turned away
from My company, and became too high to accompany Me;
They were satisfied with mere wishes
and were afflicted by their fortunes,
They claim to have plunged into the ocean of love, but are unmindful;
for they have been travelling in circles, and have not left their place
although they have made no effort to leave their place, they are tired;
They have not followed My teaching;
They prefer blindness over guidance,
due of their envious selves, they are confused and have gone astray*

Because this station is the station of the spirit, and because the spirit is the locus of passionate love, it is associated with fondness and is overwhelmed with astonishment and bewilderment. The secured wayfarer stays in it for long time because the lover is oblivious to himself and even to his Beloved; so busy is he with remembering His name and with the delight of praising His Beauty and Goodness in his poems. This happens when the state is one of expansion (*bast*); but when it is one of contraction (*qabḍ*) after expansion, and he awakens from the sleep of passionate love and bewilderment, his chest is constricted and he feels that his heart is about to be removed from his chest. He is then humbled and quiet in a true state of humbleness and quiet surrender. These two states alternate in the traveller until he ascends to the fourth station where he acquires firmness in love. Expansion and constriction are then transformed into awe (*hayba*) and intimacy (*uns*). These are two states alternate in the perfect one, and no one can know them except by taste (*dhawq*).

The difference between awe and constriction is that the soul is not impatient with awe, but it is impatient with constriction. As for the difference between intimacy and expansion, expansion overwhelms its

possessor to the extent that it is feared that he may be impolite with Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*), whereas, intimacy does not cause this.

In general one can say that fear and hope, constriction and expansion, awe and intimacy and Majesty and Beauty are two states, but the names of the two states changes with the persons who possess them and their stations. If the one who has a commanding ego or a blaming self experiences these states, then they are called fear (*khawf*) and hope (*rajāʾ*); but if the possessor of the inspired soul experiences them, then they are called contraction (*qabḍ*) and expansion (*bast*); and if the possessor of the secured, tranquil soul or the satisfied soul or the pleased soul experiences them, they are called awe (*haybah*) and intimacy (*uns*); and if the possessor of the perfect soul experiences them, they become Majesty (*jalāl*) and Beauty (*jamāl*). In conclusion, fear and hope are for the beginner, constriction and expansion are for the ones in the middle, awe and intimacy are for the perfect one, and Majesty and Beauty are for the vicegerent (*al-khalīfah*).

So, my beloved, strive to ascend from where you are experiencing alternating contraction and expansion, so that you experience awe and intimacy, then ascend to experience Majesty and Beauty; this will put you at rest because in this there is great goodness and bounty, not only for you, but also for your beloveds, especially in the state of the Majesty. In the state of the Majesty there is nothing that you will not be granted because you are the vicegerent of Allah on earth and you are truly and only His slave and servant. So He is angry when you are angry, and He avenges when you avenge. Then you see the effect flowing from your hand in the whole of existence with your own eyes without ambiguity, and your politeness with your Creator increases; you repent from all your sins and seek forgiveness for the heedlessness of your heart that [previously] diverted you from the station of slavery and servitude (*al-ʿubūdiyya*). “So remain [on the] straight path as you have been commanded [Q11:112] until certitude comes to you.” [Q15:99]. In this state you are always facing perfection and Godly Attraction (*al-jadhbah al-ilahiyyah*) and this is

better than the actions of the possessors of the burden [*i.e.* humans and *jinn*].

Do not be distressed or constrict your heart because you are on the good path, face to face with happiness, but when you experience narrowness and distress, be patient; for in this station, you are not yet free of distress because it is the station of the spirit and the spirit has a desire for freedom. When the spirit is constricted, it wants to break the cage of the body and arrive in its true world, which is the World of Detachment, by which I mean the formless world, the world of infinite eternal power and possibility (*'ālamu-l-jabarūt*), but the spirit is not able to do so in this station. So be patient during times of constriction and bear its heat because in this heat is countless and limitless wisdom. Without the fire of constriction and its heat the souls are not purified of the remaining traces of ugliness and corruption. This is because good cannot be distinguished from bad except by Fire.

When you see that you are not upright or straight in your effort, but find yourself indulging in eating and sitting with people, inclining toward their [lower] ways, then weep for yourself and about what has happened to you. Weep because of your descent from the highest station to Sijjīn, [Q83:7] and to the lowest of the low. Then, ask Allah to return you to where you were and continue to ascend toward perfection. Many seekers do not remain upright and straight and their feet slip because they are not patient enough and later regretted their actions at a time when regret was no longer beneficial.

In this station, you must oppose yourself and be stubborn with your *nafs*; and when you see its [lower] natural inclination toward something, struggle against it and do not believe it, but when your *nafs* ask you for something from the way, then obey, even if it goes to an extreme such as, increasing hunger, staying up at night, seclusion from people and minimizing speech. Only then must you obey your *nafs*, even though there is no sincerity in this because the purpose of the *nafs* is hypocrisy, and hypocrisy is polytheism. The traveller continues in his hypocrisy until he

is freed by the Help of Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*). The People of the way say that it is alright to deceive the self in this state by promising it honor, generous gifts, fame and the love of the people. This causes the self to strive and to abandon blameworthy habits. Therefore one can say to himself: If you direct yourself entirely toward Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) with practices and effort, then uncommon things will manifest by your hand, but the way between you and Allah must be filled with action and effort to please Him and to purify the self of all unworthy qualities; your effort must be to adorn your self with perfection and with the best ethics. Nonetheless, beware of some pictures and imaginings that appear to you and do not stop with them because they are obstacles that prevent your quest.

Know that whenever the yearning (*himmah*) of the traveller stops at one of the stations, its realities call to him to continue his quest. "We are a trial so do not cover up the truth." Some travellers do not experience any of this because of the truthfulness and sincerity of their direction toward their Creator and because their walking does not demand this. Their hearts are not troubled by the difficulties of the trials and they do not stop with any cosmos. Those who received some revelation at the beginning [of walking] are prone to corruption and separation. This continues until the One Who afflicted him shows him kindness and gentleness.

The greatest achievement of the traveller on the path to Allah is that as a result of his journey, his old blameworthy qualities are replaced by the praiseworthy qualities of his Protector which are acceptable, and this saves him from utter destruction. This is because the purpose of this travelling is arrival to the King of kings and this arrival cannot be achieved except through the removal of the seventy thousand mentioned veils. The reality of the veils is that they are an obstruction between the seeker and the One Who is sought. So replacing the qualities advances the relationship; so understand. This is one of the secrets so strive to replace your qualities and manners if you are longing for the Ultimate Beauty which is free of every limitation, including absoluteness. Replace satiety

with hunger, speech with silence, sleep with night vigil, and adorn yourself with poverty because hunger, silence, and sleeplessness, when met with idle talk and similiar qualities, are some of the qualities of the angels and their opposites are qualities of the animals. The human being is between the angels and the animals; so be a true human, not a human animal, so that you may ascend with humanity beyond the angels. Ascend until the mirror of your slavehood, and your insignificance, humiliation, and servitude, corresponds with the mirror of His Lordship (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*).

Complete perfection occurs when the slave is at the highest degree of servitude. This is why it is said that the highest degree of servitude is a station which is particular to the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*), and you cannot attain this highest degree; so do not covet it, rather, ask for a degree near to that highest degree. If you know this, then you know that humiliation and humbleness is the elixir of happiness, and you will know that the secrets of Lordship are deposited within [spiritual] indigence, slavery and servitude. So understand, contemplate and travel the road of humbleness and poverty. Be one of the faithful slaves free from the bondage of all otherness because you cannot attain your goal except through slavehood (*'ubūdiyya*) and servitude [to the Real Alone]. Completion can only be achieved by the way described by one of the gnostics (Ibn 'Aṭa'illāh) who said, "Plant your existence in the soil of obscurity, for the fruit of that which grows from what has not been planted is never complete."

Know that our way is not suitable for anyone except for those whose existence has been wiped out; so bury your existence and hide yourself until the saying, "Die before you die" becomes true for you. You have to embody this death, more than you embody the lower nature, to the degree that when the angel of death in charge of taking your spirit arrives to transport you from one abode to another, where the latter will free you from any remaining distress, the angel will greet you and be gentle with you because you have already offered yourself willingly to death, refered

to in the words, "Die before you die." This is the annihilation (*fanā*) which I have clarified for you in this chapter. It is a state in which no inclination remains in the traveller for either wealth, children, or any other thing, and where he has no fear of harm. There is no doubt that this is the state of the deceased. The world of the barrier, or world of the interval between this world and the first heaven of seven heavens (*‘ālam al-barzakḥ*) is unveiled to the deceased, and also to the traveller; so also is the World of Similitudes (*‘ālam al-mithāl*) revealed to the traveller. Both *‘ālam al-barzakḥ* and *‘ālam al-mithāl* are part of the World of the Angelic Dominion (*‘ālam al-malakūt*). If the traveller enters the World of Similitudes he will witness what suits his potential, his receptivity and his readiness.

O beloved traveller! If you are thirsty to arrive at these states your duty is to strive to attain them; for anyone who seeks something [with sincerity and aspiration] finds it by the Power of Allah, Exalted is He. So, beloved traveller, seek help by the mentioned practices and effort, and do not be lazy about reciting the third name, which is Hu. There are special properties of the names which are undeniable, especially the first name (*lā ‘ilāha ‘illā’llāh*). Most travellers know this. If you persist in the remembrance (*dhikr*), Allah will illuminate an angelic lamp within you by which you will see the darkness of the commanding ego and the marvelous qualities of the soul, as well as its diseases. With this knowledge, the traveller strives to empty the *nafs*, especially through the special effect of the second name (Allāh). This name allows the traveller who is busy with its remembrance to leave the darkness of disobedience and arrive at the Light of obedience. As for the special effect of the third name, it is the manifestation of the limitless Essence, and the reality of faith, and the sacred gnosis upon the heart occupying it; the traveller desires the eternal life and abandons the pleasures of the lower world.

Know that the special benefits of the names do not manifest except by abundant *dhikr*, strong loud *dhikr* and hidden *dhikr*, with courteous manners (*‘adāb*). This includes kneeling or standing facing the direction

of prayer (*qiblah*) if possible, with nothing distracting your mind, listening to your invocation attentively, with inward and outward purity, and maintaining your ritual purity (*wuḍū'*). If, while maintaining courtesy in this manner, you are also upholding the *sharī'ah*, then your state is sound. So avoid impatience and restlessness if the opening is not forthcoming, for it must arrive, even if it takes a long time. The condition of opening is rectitude (*istiqāma*) and the upholding of the *sharī'ah* and the *ṭarīqah*. From time to time, remember this name: *lā hu illā hu*. Elongate the *ā* in *illāā* and also the *u* in *hu* because it is a formidable invocation (*dhikr*).

During your remembrance address your limbs reminding them that there is nothing in existence but He (*hu*), the Real (*al-ḥaqq*), Exalted is He, and that everything other than Allah is no more than His qualities and actions, and this is the true vision. It is the vision of the perfect ones. If you keep yourself witnessing this continuously, then your state [of perfection] will never end. This is the ultimate goal, and the possessor of this continuous remembrance is not veiled from the Real by the creation, or from the creation by the Real; and he is not veiled from the unity by the multiplicity, nor is he veiled from the multiplicity by the unity. He witnesses the Real, Exalted is He, Outer (*adḥ-dḥhahir*) in the apparent phenomenon, and he would not witness Him as the Manifest far above everything without the apparent phenomenon, as is the case of some [religious] monotheists. Nonetheless, he would not witness Him as the apparent phenomenon (the Outward) without a Transcendent Manifest [Reality], as in the case of the veiled ones I have spoken about. To witness Him both [far above and emanating the phenomenon] is the witnessing of the perfect ones.

In conclusion, vision or witnessing is of three types: perfect, lacking and scanty. I have just explained the witnessing of the perfect one. As for the witnessing of the monotheists: they have been taken by their vision of the Manifest, far above everything, and are consumed within the Manifest to the degree that they are not able to see any multiplicity in the creation.

This vision is lacking because it implies the nullification and suspension of the special effects of the names of Allah, Exalted is He [*i.e.* they deny the active role of the qualities as manifested in the creation]. Nonetheless, the possessor of this vision is excused because he is still in the third station, and is overcome [by it], for the third station lacks [perfection]. As for the witnessing of the beginners: their vision is scanty because they are veiled by the creation (*al-khalq*) from the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) and therefore they only witness the multiplicity of the creation.

As for the perfect one, he witnesses the multiplicity in the eye of unity and witnesses the unity in the eye of the multiplicity without either veiling the other. So the perfect one is not veiled by the creation from the Ḥaqq, nor is he veiled by the Ḥaqq from the creation. And the first degree of perfection is the fourth station, *an-naḥs al-muṭmaʿinnah*, which I will clarify, if Allah so wills.

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The Tranquil, Secure Soul

an-nafs al-muṭma'innah

An exposition of its walking, its world, locus, states, light or source of arrival (wārid) and qualities.

Its walking is *with* Allah. Its world is the Muḥammadan Reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyyah*). Its locus is the secret. Its state is sincere serenity, or tranquility and security. Its *wārid* [for further ascension] is some of the secrets of the [Divine] Law. Its qualities are generosity (*kāram*), reliance [on Allah] (*tawakkul*), forbearance (*hulm*), worship (*'ibādah*), gratitude, thankfulness (*shukr*), contentment with destiny, and being patient when afflicted with difficulty.

One of the signs indicating that the traveller is in the fourth station where the soul is called the tranquil, secure soul is that he does not abandon his duty any moment of his time. He finds pleasure only when he embodies the ethics of the chosen one (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*). He is not serene except when he follows his teachings. This is because this station is the station of mastery (*tamkīn*) of the Eye of Certainty and of perfect faith (*al-kāmil*), whereas the previous station was that of mutability (*talwīn*).

In this station people are delighted to look at the traveller and listeners feel delight listening to him; were he to speak without ceasing, his words would never be boring or wearisome. This is because his tongue does not utter a word except that which conforms to what the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) said, without reading it from a book and without hearing it from anyone. This is because his hearing was not sensory; he heard what Allah cast within his secret: "O My beloved! I am your Secret and you are My secret." When his disturbance calmed with serenity, and he drowned in the ocean of life and the courteous manners that gave him a sense of reverence and awe always, Allah bestowed upon him veneration and charisma, manifesting [through him]

the reality of the world in the cosmos, and the reality of annihilation (*fanā*'), and the knowledge (*'ilm*) [that comes from gnosis] of the meaning of His saying: "All things will perish save His Presence." [Q28:88].

In this station, it is the traveller's duty to meet with people occasionally to emanate upon them from the gifts that Allah has blessed him with and to share the wisdom within his heart. O perfect one! Go out to meet them and excel in giving good as Allah excelled good for you. But set a time for personal retreat for yourself because in this station, you are in the lowest of the degrees of perfection, so it does not benefit you to meet people all the time, for this will impede your ascension into the remaining stations, and by that I mean the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh. If you find benefit in seclusion, then be in solitude and if you find benefit in gathering with others then meet people. The sign of the benefit of gathering is when all those who are present benefit from you by that which Allah has bestowed upon you from the heart's gnosis, not from the knowledge in books.

In this station, busy yourself with the fourth name which is "Yā Ḥaqq" by mentioning it with or without the calling particle "Yā." Remember it as much as you can and do not pay attention to what appears to you and ask your Lord to not reveal anything to you which may cause your discharge [from the path] and stop you from serving Him and from standing at His door. If what will be revealed to you is not protected by Him, it will be the cause of discharging you from the Presence of Nearness because no one can dwell in the Presence of Nearness except the pure, faithful slaves and servants who are not deceived by or become arrogant by being exalted [to the level of] being able to pierce through supernatural phenomenon beyond what is common. This is why you see that when Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) manifests some extraordinary event (*karāmāt*; miracles, etc.) at the hands of the protected perfect ones, they do not even sense it, and they do not know if a miracle (*karāmāh*) has manifested through them or not.

Know that when the traveller arrives at the Presence of [Divine] Proximity, all miracles are at his finger tips, but if the lower desire of the traveller asks for this manifestation before its time [has matured], and he demonstrates a pursuit of [performing] miracles, then he will exhaust himself, and be cut off from his pursuit, even if the supernatural event happened. This will not benefit him in this world (*dunyā*) or in the final world (*ākhirah*) because these events are still part of this world. When he realizes this, he will regret [his attachment to them] and weep and withdraw from the station he exhausted himself in attaining. Know that the soul that is raised up by these supernatural events is not ugly in itself because it has been honored by the generosity of Allah toward His slave. Nonetheless, pursuing it and desiring it is an ugly quality that cuts one off from the station of the presence of nearness, which cannot be attained except through slavehood and servitude in which the secrets of Lordship are deposited. Do not stop with any part of the creation because that will become your only fortune.

Know that in this station, you will lean toward litanies, recitations or invocations (*al-awārd*), and supplications (*al-ad'iyah*), and you will love the presence of the Chosen One (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*), a love that is different from your previous love for him before you arrived at this station. O faithful perfect believer! Do not feel safe with your ego-self (*nafs*) in any station because enmity is implanted within its nature and cannot be trusted, and one is not secure from its cunning plots, even if it claims friendship. This is because the human being is vulnerable and is exposed to many afflictions and difficulties during his life, and he is subject to corruption, so he must liberate himself from all destructive blemishes.

In this station, you may experience a wish for money to help you in serving Allah, and helping your beloveds. This is not harmful as long as it meets the following conditions: 1) Your intention must truly be to help yourself and others to obey Allah; 2) Your heart must not be so occupied

with earning it that it makes you heedless of Allah; and 3) When you earn some money, you must not conceal it and appear to be poor.

In this station, you may also experience the desire for leadership and fame and your ego will whisper to you that you are able to guide others to spiritual maturity and to become a *shaykh* around whom people gather, so that by your hand they may be guided and you will be rewarded [by Allah]. Beware of this because it is a blameworthy quality of the self.

Nonetheless, if Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) establishes you in this station, and causes you to become known, and clothes you with the garment of a *shaykh*, without any effort on your part and without any desire or seeking this, then stand [in obedience] to the Order of Allah; for it is then better for you than seclusion. The sign of this order is that your beloveds love and obey you. And also that, when you look within yourself you do not see any distinction between you and them, but perceive them as better than you because you are indebted to them for their belief that they are lower and for their respect for you. If you are in this state with your beloveds, then guide them, glorify and beautify the path of Purification (*ṭarīq at-taṣawwuf*), humbleness and poverty for them, and lower the wing of humility to them. Praise Allah for qualifying you for this station of which you are not worthy, and testify that it is His favor upon you. And if you ever think that they are in your debt, then know that you are not one of the people of this path, and you are not one of the people of this way, and you must then abandon this place. Separate yourself from them, and seek freedom for yourself from all the remaining blemishes and from otherness because this is important for your sake and for their sake.

Some souls are gentle and soft by natural disposition (*fīṭrah*) and they have intelligence and nobility. When these souls cross the stations, they pass through them easily, and when they arrive in this fourth station, they deserve to become guides because they are affable, gentle, and forbearing by nature, and while crossing the stations, they purified themselves of human turbidities. For them there is no harm in guiding their brothers and

sisters and prescribing for them the beneficial remedies of this path under the previously mentioned conditions. This applies in the absence of a more perfected guide because in the presence of a more perfect guide, the traveller should see him as a Divine favor that allows one to rest and to leave toiling to someone else.

Other souls are coarse and cunning. When they cross the stations, and their blameworthy qualities are replaced by the praiseworthy qualities, and they arrive at the fourth station and become serene, they still do not qualify as guides because they lack the conditions necessary to guide others. So, you who possess this soul must not hasten for this [*i.e.* to guide others], but you should complete your journey by ascending to the fifth station, then to the sixth and the seventh stations.

The stations through which the travellers ascend are seven: the first in which the soul is named the commanding ego, then the second in which the soul is named the blaming self, then the third in which the soul is named the inspired soul, then the fourth in which the soul is named the tranquil, secure soul, and some stop here without going on to the fifth, sixth and seventh stations because they consider only the naturally, pure souls (*fitrah*), which when they reach the fourth station are undoubtedly perfect and worthy of guiding others.

Know that when you complete the fourth station, and your soul rests in compassionate serenity [with the All-Merciful], then your feet do not slip from following the Book and the way of the Messenger (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) (*as-sunnah*), not even the length of an ant's step. On the contrary you abide by the noble [Divine] Law, following the rules with your body, heart, soul and spirit. At this point, you find that your speech, your actions, and your states are with Allah, as He wills, not as you will. It will be said to you, "O you soul whose self is at peace! Return to your Lord well-pleased, well-pleasing. So enter [the ranks of] My worshippers and enter My Garden." [Q89:27-30]. Then, forgetfulness of all the things of the world other than Allah overwhelms you, and you do not comprehend any of the affairs of the lower world or the final world except

when it is present before you; when they are absent from you, you are absent from them. This is because your heart is continuously contemplating the Beauty and the Majesty of the Real, and He is Allah. "Truly I am Allah – there is no deity other than I – so worship Me and establish the *ṣalāh* for My remembrance. Truly, the Hour is coming, though I have willed to hide [its time], so that every soul shall be rewarded according to its striving." [Q20:14-15].

The Satisfied or Contented Soul

an-nafs al-rāḍiya

An exposition of its walking, its world, locus, states, light or source of arrival (wārid) and qualities, and how to ascend from it to the sixth station.

Its walking is *in* Allah. Its world is the Divinity (*lāhūt*). Its locus is the secret of the secret. Its state is annihilation (*fanāʾ*), but not in the manner of the annihilation previously mentioned. The difference between this annihilation and the previous one is that the former is the state of one in the middle of the path.

Know, my beloved, that when the senses are bewildered, so that they are unaware of the objects of perception, this is the state of those who are on the threshold of subsistence (*baqāʾ*) of those at the end of travelling. Annihilation (*fanāʾ*) here means the end of human qualities, in preparation for subsistence, until subsistence is reached. The subsistence which then follows annihilation immediately is because the annihilation is the Truth of Certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*), which began in the previous station; the difference there being that the human qualities remained. In this station, these qualities annihilate until no trace of them remains. This is why the traveller in this station is annihilated and his ego-self does not subsist as it did in the stations before this station. Nonetheless, he does not completely remain with Allah, as will be the case in the seventh station.

This is a state that cannot be discerned except by direct tasting (*dḥawq*). However, a perfect guide may be able to explain it to a seeker who has himself reached [a degree of] perfection.

The qualities of this soul are detachment from everything other than Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*), sincerity, faith, scrupulousness, and a contented acceptance of everything that occurs in the world, without the heart becoming agitated, and without resorting to spirituality to lift the harm. This is because this soul is drowned in witnessing absolute Beauty. This state does not prevent him from guiding and giving advice to people, nor from commanding them [with good] and prohibiting them [from evil]. No one listens to his words without benefiting from them. His heart is occupied with the world of Divinity (*lāhūt*) and by the secret of the secret.

The possessor of this station is drowned in the ocean of politeness with Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*). His supplication is never turned down; but out of modesty and politeness he does not allow his tongue to ask for anything unless there is an emergency; then he asks and his prayer is never refused. He is loved and honored by people, and is respected by those of high rank and low rank because he lives in the Presence of Proximity. "Surely today you are established [in a place of] trust." [Q12:54]. So people are obliged to venerate him even though they are unconscious of why they venerate and respect him. He must then beware of inclining toward them, especially toward the oppressors among them, so that the fire of their traits does not touch him, especially if they excel in giving to him and he is poor; for the heart is inclined to love those who treat them well, but Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) says, "And do not lean toward those who unjustly oppress [themselves and others], lest you be touched by the Fire." [Q11:113].

O beloved! Occupy yourself with your Lord, and do not lean toward the oppressors, for as long as you turn away from them and occupy yourself with your Lord, their yearning will increase. And if Allah decrees a share for you in their money, it will reach you, even against their will. So do not lean toward them or hope for anything that they possess. Do not

turn away from them if they come to you while you are in this station. And even though there is nothing for you to fear from the cunning plots of the ego, caution is best; so be safe and beware. Nonetheless, do not make people hate you and turn away from you. The truth is that the one in this station has no choice, but to find rest in Allah because he has no other. So if you see yourself inclined toward people, then know that you are not in this station, because the possessor of this station is on the threshold of authentic inner control and all outer events are under its authority. How can he then incline or rely on anyone other than Allah?

In this station, occupy yourself with the fifth name which is Ḥayy. [One Who possesses life and over whom death holds no sway]. Repeat it abundantly so that your annihilation will depart and you will remain in subsistence by the Living One, and you enter the sixth station, and ascend from standing at the doorway to the houses of the Beloved. As long as you occupy yourself with this name, your annihilation will depart and you will remain in subsistence by the Living One, and you will be qualified by the perfect qualities, and this is the meaning of, "I become the hearing by which he hears and the sight by which he sees."

Know that there are names that are called subsidiary names, and these names are: the One Who Bestows Favors (*al-wahhāb*); the Opener (*al-fattāḥ*); the One (*al-wāḥid*); the Unique (*al-aḥad*); the Self-Sustaining (*al-ṣamad*). In this station, occupy yourself with the names *al-fattāḥ*, or *al-wahhāb* together with *al-ḥayy*, which I mentioned previously, to ease your progress to the sixth station, of which you are in dire need; you will hear marvels in it!

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The Pleased Soul

an-nafs al-marḍiya

An exposition of its walking, its world, locus, states, light or source of arrival (wārid) and qualities, and how to enter the seventh station.

Its walking is *from* Allah. Its world is the visible world. Its locus is the Hidden. Its state is perplexity and its *wārid* [for ascension] is the Divine Law. It abandons everything other than Allah and is gentle and kind with people, encourages them to righteousness and pardons their sins, loves them and becomes inclined toward guiding them from the darkness of their traits and egos to the lights of their spirits; this is not the inclination experienced by the commanding ego which is a blameworthy quality.

One of the qualities of this soul is uniting the love of Allah with the love of people. This is a marvelous quality that is not easy to embody except for the people of this station, by which I mean the sixth station. This is why in this station the traveller is not distinguished from the common people in his outer appearance. Inwardly, however, he is the essence of the secrets, and he is the role model of the best of people. In his witnessing, he does not see otherness as other for he is the circumference of Godly knowledge, not the knowledge gained by books.

This soul is named the pleased soul (*an-nafs al-marḍiya*) because the Real (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*) is pleased with it; and its walking is *from* Allah, which means that it obtains what it needs of knowledge from the Presence of the Living, the Self-Subsistent (*al-ḥayy al-qayyūm*) then returns from the Hidden to the visible world by the permission of Allah to benefit people by what Allah has bestowed upon it.

Its state is perplexity which is mentioned in the *ḥadīth*, “O my Lord! Increase my perplexity in You!” This is not the blameworthy kind which exists at the beginning of the journey.

One of the qualities of the traveller in this station is to keep his promises and to put everything in its right perspective. He thus spends liberally on the right cause to the extent that the ignorant think he is extravagant, or he may withhold a little when he thinks that the cause is not appropriate, so that the ignorant may call him the worst miser among all the misers. If he praised someone who was not worthy of praise, then the suffering of that person would increase, and if he blamed someone worthy of praise, that blame would not prevent his right to receive [the intended blessing]; but his quality is to take the middle course in all affairs.

These are the states of the perfect ones, who possess hearts. The quality of the perfect one is always balanced and does not lean toward excess or deficiency; this is a state that no one is capable of except one in this station. This quality [of balance] is easy to describe by the tongue, but it is heavy on the heart during the time of trial. Everyone loves this quality and loves to be attributed with it, but it is very difficult and there is almost no one who is capable of [embodying] it.

Know that at the beginning of this station, the good news of the greater vicegerency (*al-khilāfa al-kubrā*) begins to show itself, and by the end of this station, you are invested with it. This is the investiture of, "I am his hearing by which he hears, and his sight by which he sees, his hand by which he strikes, and his feet by which he walks. By Me he hears, by Me he sees, by Me he strikes, and by Me he walks." This is the result of the nearness reached by voluntary extra practices (*nawfl*). The slave's effect is actualized by his complete absorption in the Real. Understand this because it is very subtle and accurate, and beware of misunderstanding that can lead you to believe that you are the Real, as some unbelievers think. They read books about the *kḥawāṣṣ* (the elect in contrast to the commonality), may Allah be pleased with them, but they do not understand what this means; they especially misunderstand the books of Shaykh Muḥyid-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, and their misunderstanding confuses others.

The realization (*taḥaqquq*) of this station is when the traveller arrives at the station of annihilation, as mentioned before, and when his blameworthy human qualities are annihilated. These qualities are the locus of his reactions and misery. This annihilation occurs because he seeks nearness to Allah through extra practices, which are the discipline and effort against the ego, the greater *jihād*.

It is the way of Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*), from His generosity, to favor the traveller with an effective quality to compensate him for the loss of the annihilated quality by leave of the Giver. This is the Truth of Certainty. Beware then of following the path of those who are confused and straying, those who think that Allah, Exalted is He, is located in anything or that anything is located in Him. Allah is far beyond being located within something and nothing can be located within Him. The Truth is that these matters cannot be comprehended by minds. If the mind tries to comprehend it, it falls into a hopeless state of infidelity (*zindīq*) and into covering up the Truth (*kufr*). This is because these matters cannot be comprehended, unless by Godly support, because annihilation (*fanā'*) cannot be seen outwardly, so it cannot be measured or demonstrated. The same can be said about subsistence in Allah (*al-baqā'*) and to nearness brought about by voluntary actions (*an-nawfl*) and the nearness of the obligatory ones (*farḍ*). What I have mentioned in this chapter is only for the one in this station; this one will understand all that is mentioned and, moreover, he will taste it, if Allah so wills.

Know that the end of the stations is when the traveller arrives at his Adamic form, which was the *qiblah* for the angels. The traveller will be the reality of this form, the praiseworthy Muḥammadan reality, which is Allah's greatest secret, and which is the Lordly Subtlety. This is the Ultimate Nearness to the Lord's Presence. If the traveller arrives at it, he is actualized by pure slavehood, servitude, helplessness and humility. And he knows himself by these qualities, and knows his Lord by the qualities of Lordship. If one knows himself with humiliation and annihilation, then he knows his Lord with Honor, Might and Subsistence. This explains the

correspondance of slavehood and servitude to the levels of Lordship, and the engraving of the One in the helpless, as expressed in His saying, "Neither My heavens nor My earth contain Me, but I am contained in the heart of My faithful, believing, slave and servant."

Whenever the slave knows his Lord through gnosis (*maʿrifah*), he knows the secret that is deposited in the reality of all things, which is mentioned when He says, "And He taught ʿĀdam the names – all of them." [Q2:31]. Here we come to a place where expressions are too limited to carry the meaning of the secrets; exalted is Allah, far beyond equals and analogies.

If this [original] form is revealed to you, you will know that this is the greatest goal of the travellers, and it is the loftiest house of the ones walking [on the path to Allah]. This form is the most precious thing in existence to the perfect ones. Exert your utmost effort to seek it by being straight on the path, and by holding firmly to the [Divine] Law (*al-sharīʿah*), and occupy yourself with the sixth name, which is the Sustainer (*al-qayyūm*), so that the good deeds of the righteous become the offenses of the ones brought near. Be always polite by following the good manners (*ʿadāb*) of the [Divine] Law (*sharīʿah*), the good manners of the way (*ṭarīqa*), and the good manners of Reality (*ḥaqīqah*), and let neither one distract you from the other, until you reach the seventh station, seeking to be actualized by the Adamic form, and by the Praiseworthy Muḥammadan Reality.

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The Perfect Soul

an-nafs al-kāmilah

An exposition of its walking, its world, locus, states, light or source of arrival (wārid) and qualities.

Know, my beloved, that the walking of the Perfect Soul is by Allah. Its world is unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity. Its locus is the Most Hidden; the relationship between it and the Hidden is like that between the spirit and the body. Its state is Subsistence (*baqā'*), and its *wārid* is all the previously mentioned *wāridāt* of the nafs, and it combines all of the aforementioned praiseworthy qualities.

Know that the name that occupies the traveller in this perfect station is the Compeller (*al-qahhār*) which is the seventh name. [O Compeller, the One Who imposes His wishes on the creation without resistance.]

This is the greatest station because the authentic authority of the Truth over falsehood is completed, and effort has reached its completion. The possessor of this station has no other desire and has attained the good pleasure of Allah. So all his movements are acts of goodness, and his breath is an expression of power, and his authority is worship. If people see him, they remember Allah, and how could they not when he is the Friend of Allah and he is the friend [for you]?

This state begins in the fourth station because the fourth station is the station of the common Friends, while the fifth station is the station of the special Friends (*kḥawāṣṣ awliyā'*) and the sixth station is the station of the Friends of the elite among the special Friends. Glory belongs to Him; there is no preventing what He gives and there is no giving what He withholds.

Know that the name the Compeller (*al-qahhār*) is one of the names of the spiritual axis (*al-quṭb*) and from this name, the Quṭb gives from the gifts of the lights and the good tidings, and the seekers experience joy, happiness and attraction in their hearts. It is the supply that the Quṭb gives

to the seekers in compensation for their remembrance and their directed effort toward their Lord. The person of this station is continuously worshipping with his body, his tongue, his hand, his feet, and/or with his heart. He seeks forgiveness in abundance, and is humble. His joy and delight is in [seeing] people turn toward the Real. His anger and sorrow is in [seeing] them turn away from the Real. He loves the seeker of the Real more than he loves his own child that came from his body. He has plenty of pain and is weak in his body and movements. In his heart there is no hate of any creature even though he commands to good and prohibits evil. He manifests love to the family of love. He is not taken away from Allah by any blame directed toward him; however, he stills shows aversion where aversion is deserved. He puts everything in its place. If he wants something and asks Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) for it, Allah does not turn his request down, but He responds in approval and grants it for him. This is the state of the People Of The Truth by Allah

Listen, my beloved, and be absent from this world. Be with the Word, with the owner of the Word, the most beloved, the Messenger of Allah, Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*), “Whoever is pleased with Allah as Lord and with self-submission (*ʿislām*) as a way to fulfill spiritual debt (*dīn*; religion) and with Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) as a Messenger, has tasted the sweetness of faith (*ʿimān*).” This [sweet] tasting emerges from the joy of gnosis and from having knowledge of the Light, which Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) made dwell in the hearts of those whom He loves. There is nothing more mighty or glorious than this Light.

The reality of gnosis is that the heart takes its life from the One Who gives life (*al-muḥiyy*). Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) says, “How can you cover up [the Truth] about Allah when you were dead and He made you alive?” [Q2:28]. And He (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) also says, “To warn every living being who is truly alive.” [Q36:70]. And He (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) says, “We gave them and their fathers the good things [of life].”

[Q21:44]. If the ego-self dies, the lower world is removed, and if the heart dies, the Protector (*waliyy*) is far away.

A gnostic was once asked, "When does the slave know that he has real gnosis?" The gnostic replied, "When he sees the Real with the eye of annihilating everything except Him." It was said that gnosis is the end of seeing anything else but Him; and anything other than Allah becomes more insignificant than a tiny mustard seed. Allah says, "Say, 'Allah' and leave them," [Q6:91] for whoever looks at Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) will not look at this world (*dunyā*) or at the final world (*ākhirah*). The sun of the gnostic's heart glows stronger than the sun, and when its radiating light rises, it is more pleasant.

*The sun of Whom I fell in love with has risen at night,
illuminating everything so that it does not set;*

The sun of every morning sets at night, but the heart's sun never sets.

Knowledge of certainty (*yaqīn*) has three dimensions: 1) Knowledge of the unity, and this is the knowledge of the common believer; 2) Knowledge with clear logical eloquence, and this is the knowledge of scholars and wise ones; 3) Knowledge of the qualities of the Oneness of the Singularity, and this is the knowledge of the Friends of Allah, Exalted is He, and His chosen purified ones to whom He manifests what He does not manifest to those below them [in knowledge and rank]. He gives them miracles (*karāmāt*), but it is not permissible to describe this to anyone who is not of His chosen purified ones. Allah singles them out from all creatures, purifies them for Himself, and chooses them. Their lives are Mercy (*raḥman*) and their deaths are an aspiration (*ghābtah*) [for every traveller]. Blessed are they!

Knowledge has two dimensions: Affirming the Oneness of the unity (*al-waḥīd*) and the Compeller (*al-qahhār*); and then there is the Knowledge, one step greater than perfect, which no one has a way to attain.

Unity and Divestment

at-tawhīd wa at-tajrīd

The Friends of Allah have alluded to gathered-ness or bringing-together as being the divestment that occurs when one realizes the Divine oneness; and they have alluded to separation as being the acquisition of the slave (i.e., the opposite of divestment).

My beloved, open your heart and let me explain to you that knowledge is a tree with three branches: Unification (*at-tawhīd*); detachment or divestment (*at-tajrīd*); and singling out (*tafrīd*). Unification implies affirmation, and detachment implies faith, and singling-out implies being solely for Allah. The first step of gnosis is unification, which means cutting the supply [of the ego-self], and then detachment, which means cutting the causes, and then singling-out, which means singling-out [in his perception and belief] the Sole One and lifting away from Him any attribute of accidental origination [as opposed to Essential] and only ascribing to Him [and none else] the attribute of the Eternal and the Unique.

The road to knowledge has five ways:

- 1) Being in awe inwardly and outwardly;
- 2) Surrendering to Him in slavehood and servitude (*‘ubūdiyyah*);
- 3) Ceasing to be but for Him;
- 4) Sincerity with Him in speech, action and intention; and
- 5) Observing every thought at every blink of the eye.

It is narrated that one of the gnostics said, “I went out with some of my brethren and we came to some boys throwing pebbles at a man. One of the brethren asked them, ‘What do you want with him?’ They said, ‘He is a madman who claims that he sees Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*).’ We approached the man and found him to be a handsome young man who had

the signs of gnosis manifested on him. We greeted him and said, 'They say that you claim to be seeing Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*)!' He said, 'Away from me! Had I lost Him for a twinkle of an eye, I would have died an hour ago; and he began to recite:

*The beloved asks his Beloved to be pleased,
And the wish of the beloved is to meet his Beloved;
Always observing Him with the eyes of his heart,
For the heart knows its Lord and sees Him;
The Beloved is pleased with the beloved for approaching Him,
More than the other worshippers because he does not want but Him.'*

"I asked him, 'Are you a madman?' He answered, 'To the people of the earth, yes, but to the people of the heaven, no.' I asked, 'How is your state with your Protector, Allah?' He said to me, 'Since I have known Him, I have never been unaffected by Him.' I asked, 'Since when have you known Him?' He said, 'Since He put my name among the madmen.'"¹⁷

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¹⁷ He disengaged himself from material matters by setting up in himself the form of his Beloved until he embodied those meanings and those meanings then left a trace on his self.

Intelligence and Incapacity

al-‘aql wal-‘ajz

It was narrated by Shaddād Ibn al-Aswad that the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “The intelligent one is the one who disapproves of his ego-self and prepares for what comes after death, while the incapable one is the one who follows his ego with its lower desires and leaves the trust for Allah to follow up.” Know that conduct (*as-sulūk*) in accordance to this *ḥadīth* is gnosis. Gnosis belongs to the slave and the giving of knowledge belongs to the Lord, Exalted is He. Gnosis is the greatest and most honoring gift that Allah bestows upon His slaves. When Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*) wants to choose a slave of His slaves to favor him over other creatures, and when He wants to let the sun of gnosis rise within his secret, He looks toward him with the eye of favor and mercy and opens the doors of gifts to him. He then honors him with alertness, and awakens him from the sleep of the heedless ones. Then, He blesses him with stability (*tamkīn*) by expanding his heart. He takes death away from his heart by giving him understanding. So he understands that what is with Allah cannot be gained except by obedience. When he understands this, illusion departs from him. Allah honors him with modesty, fear, and certainty as doubt is removed from him.

If these qualities are brought together within the slave, his heart and intellect become illuminated with the [Divine] Light so that he can see what is beyond the veils and he begins to yearn for the Garden. The flames of his fire extinguish. If gnosis is engraved upon something, no one can look at it without swooning from its beauty and goodness. Everyone has a desirable quality, and the desirable quality of the faithful believer is gnosis. It was once said to one of the gnostics, “I love you.” And he said, “If you know Allah, then He is enough for you, but if you do not know Him, then seek one who knows Him, and he will show you Him.”

Know that gnosis is like a tree that a king plants in his garden. It is highly esteemed and productive. Its fruit is sweet and its leaves are soft.

Its branches are refined and its soil is pure. Its water is fresh and its fragrance is good. Its owner is tender toward it for its invaluable excellence. He is well-pleased with its flowers. He removes all blemishes from it and prevents it from harm.

This is similar to the tree of gnosis, which Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta‘ālā*) plants within the garden of his faithful believer. He cares for it with His generosity and sends clouds of gifts from of His treasury of mercy every hour. He sends a rain of extraordinary events – miracles (*karāmāt*) – upon it by the thunder of [Divine] power and the lightening of [Divine] Will to purify it of the dust of observing slavehood and servitude. Then He sends subtle breezes of kindness from behind the veils of Attentive Care by which He honors the Friends, and He maintains the tree of gnosis without end. With His secret, He gracefully passes underneath its shadow, adding its fragrance, and removing the bad and blemished fruit with the scythe of politeness.

If the gnostic remains a long time under the tree of gnosis in the station of the secret, and if his circulation around it is uninterrupted, he becomes moved to rejoice with its fruits; so he stretches his pure hand toward the fruit and harvests it with his fingers, as he steps into its sacred place. He consumes [the fruit] with yearning until the fire [of the yearning] overcomes him. Then he strikes the ocean of affectionate love with the hand of expansion, and drinks a sip from it that intoxicates him so that he is unaware of anything other than the Real. It is an intoxication from which he does not awaken until he fully experiences it. Then, with wings of yearning, he flies to that which people’s minds, with their illusions, cannot comprehend and they have no awareness of it.

Know, my beloved, that it is the right of the gnostic who Allah honored by gnosis not to humiliate himself with another. It is also the right of the Friend who Allah put in charge to establish His rights. It is also the right of whomever Allah has honored with His companionship, to not turn to other than Him, and he must not give in to his lower desires.

Know that, in the night, there is a drink for the hearts of the gnostics that causes their hearts to fly in love and yearning for Allah. Those looking at Him, and no other, have won the purity of this world and the final world. That drink is the drink of perplexity and there are two kinds: the perplexity of being lost and distracted, and the acceptable perplexity of amazement. The perplexity of being lost and distracted is for the agitated, and the acceptable perplexity of amazement is for the yearning gnostics. "O my Lord, by the direction of those perplexed, increase me in perplexity of You!"

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The Guarding Consciousness: Godfearingness within the Heart

at-taqwā fi al-qalb

Allah, Exalted is He says, "O you people! Surely We have created you from a man and a woman and made you peoples and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Truly the most honorable among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most conscious of Allah, warding off evil. Allah is Knowing, Aware." [Q49:13].

Anas bin Mālik narrated that he heard the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) say, "Self-submission (*‘islām*) is outward while faith is within the heart and here is the guarding consciousness (*taqwā*).” He repeated this three times as he pointed to his chest (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*).”

Know that *taqwā* settles in the heart and is affirmed there. It rules faith, which is the spirit of gnosis. Know, my beloved, that Allah, Exalted is He, made a decree for everything, and for every decree, a limit, and for every limit, a cause, and for every cause, a time limit, and for every time

limit there is an inscription, and for every inscription there is a command, and for every command there is a meaning, and for every meaning there is a perceived truth, and for every perceived truth there is a reality, and for every reality there is truth, and for every truth there is a family worthy of it, and for every family worthy of it there is a mark (*'alāma*).¹⁸

By this mark the truthful is distinguished from the falsifier. For every possessor of a heart that was made to sit on the carpet of realization and actualization of gnosis there is a mark that falls upon his face and its effect appears in his movements, actions and words, as expressed in Allah's saying, "You will know them by their mark." [Q2:273]. The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) said, "Whoever conceals an inmost secret, Allah dresses him up with its garment; if [the secret] is good, then good, and if it is evil, then evil."

It was asked of one of the gnostics, "Why do gnostics have the most beautiful faces and are revered more than others?" He said, "Because they are alone with Allah in intimacy (*uns*) and they are brought near to Allah as they direct themselves completely toward Him. They rely on Him with awe and enchantment. So He dresses them with the Light of His gnosis. About Him, they speak, and for Him they act, and from Him they ask, and Him they desire. These are the elite of the foremost. They seek only to obey Allah without attachment [to the world]. They advise the common people without greed. They yearn and always return to Allah, Exalted is He. Their hearts are in awe [of Allah], and they are without mistakes and protected by their hearts from being distracted by trials with people. The remembrance of Allah protects the gnostic from the evil of the whisperer (*al-khannās*), his heart expands with joy, his body is hurled [or overthrown], his heart is wounded, and the door of the Angelic world (*al-malakūt*) opens for him.

¹⁸ They have the mark or signpost that points to Allah; they are proof of Him.

The heart of the gnostic is like a lamp, and his limbs are in surrender to it. His tongue is busy reciting the Qur'ān, and his color is pale out of fear of separation. His self is an essence in service to the Universally Merciful. His heart radiates by the light of faith. His soul is occupied with supplication and his spirit is occupied with proximity to the Lord. On his tongue, Lordship is described, and he serves eternity in all directions. The traces of slavehood and servitude are imprinted on his soul. His heart worships Singularity, but his inmost secret is ecstatic by Divinity, and within his spirit he is immersed in the Oneness of witnessing.

Know that there are four signs of a gnostic traveller: his love for the All-Mighty, his abandonment of excessiveness and lack, his following of what is sent down, and his fear [due to his complete gnosis] of reestablishing the original condition by a reverse of the changes he has undergone.

The Human Being Is With Whom He Loves

Abu Mūsā al-Ash‘ary, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām) said, “One is with whom he loves.” Know, my beloved, that you are with whom you love; for whoever loves a group of people, follows the traces they leave. Know that you cannot join the chosen ones until you follow their traces, and are guided by their guidance, and imitate their way, and, awake or asleep, abide by their doctrine because you take care to be one of them. One of the wise said:

*You rebel against God while claiming love for Him
I swear by my life, this is a strange measure;
For if your love was sincere, you would obey Him
Surely the lover is obedient to his beloved.*

This noble *ḥadīth* reveals the [subtle] love of the gnostics and gives good news of being able to join them if your love is true and sincere. Is religion something different from love for the sake of Allah and rejection for the sake of Allah? Surely, purity and deep love raises the gnostic to a station of the secret and intimacy with the presence, more than others.

Know, my beloved, that the gnostic knows the secrets of the seekers by witnessing their aspiration. The worshippers are obliged to fulfill the sincerity of slavehood and servitude, whereas the gnostic explains to the worshippers how to realize and to actualize the conditions of slavehood and servitude, so that they may cross the limits of slavehood and servitude to Lordship, and beyond the limit of poverty to sufficiency. Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*) says, “O People! You are the poor in need of Allah. And Allah – He is the Self-Sufficient (*al-ghanniy*), the Praised (*al-ḥamīd*).” [Q35:15].

Allah made a cause for everything, and He made the cause of freedom from bondage to be the establishment of a truthful sincere slavehood and servitude [to the Real]. This is expressed in His saying, "And who guards himself for Allah – He will appoint for him a way out." [Q65:2]. This means freeing him from bondage to anyone or anything, but Him. And He then provides him with intimacy, love and more yearning for Him, "– and will provide for him from where he never reckoned." [Q65:3]. There is another meaning for, "Who guards himself for Allah." The one who preserves the secret from the impure veils of turning to other than Him, "He will appoint for him a way out," meaning a way out of the veils of separation. "And He then provides him," meaning with witnessing (*mushāhadah*), direct connection (*ta'alluq*), and communication (*waslah*), "from where he never reckoned."

He made knowing the self a condition for the slave to know his Lord. Whoever knows himself by slavehood and servitude (*'ubūdiyyah*), knows his Lord by Lordship (*rubūbīya*), and by witnessing (*shahādah*) Him; whoever knows himself by annihilation (*fanā'*), knows his Lord by subsistence (*baqā'*); whoever knows himself as desolate and at fault, knows his Lord as fulfilling and giving; whoever knows himself by poverty (*faqr*) and firmly stands on his feet for Allah, knows his Lord as sufficing and providing; and whoever knows that his soul is [created] for the One in charge of him, his need for any other is reduced because he is sufficed by Allah.

It was narrated that the Prophet (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) said, "Whoever knows Allah establishes His rights." This means that whoever knows Allah by guidance submits himself to Him; whoever knows Allah by His Lordship (*rubūbīya*) meets Him with the condition of slavehood and servitude (*'ubūdiyyah*), but whoever knows Allah as rewarding [with pleasures] causes himself to fall into suffering; whoever knows Allah as the Self-Sufficient is sufficed by Him from all others. It was narrated that Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta'ālā*) inspired Dawūd (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) saying, "Whoever knows Me wants Me and seeks Me, and

whoever seeks Me finds Me, and whoever finds Me will never choose another Beloved but Me.”

Whoever knows Allah, loves Him; and whoever loves Him, obeys Him; and whoever obeys Him, isolates his heart from everything but Him. Whoever is deprived of gnosis is deprived of the sweetness of obedience and is deprived of the sweetness of intimacy. This kind of person does not exert any effort in relationship and does know Allah’s invaluable Reality; he is then overcome by states, and falls off the straight path of the secret, which is with the Real. Whoever knows Allah, but within his heart is a worrisome concern for other than Allah, then his prostration to Him is not a pure prostration. Whoever fears Allah in all that he does is secure from Him in everything. Whoever removes himself from the causes that occupy people, he connects to the causes that occupy his soul with Allah; whoever conceals the secrets of hearts, the secrets of the Unseen are revealed to him; whoever seeks the pleasure of His Protector is not concerned with the wrath of anyone else. Whoever is in close proximity to Allah is a stranger to anything else.

Whoever wants to drink a sip of the love of Allah, let him give a drink [of love] to the one who detests that which is not Allah. If your heart finds rest in something other than Allah, then you have nothing to do with Allah. The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, “Whoever wakes up occupied by something other than Allah, then he has nothing to do with Allah.” Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*) said to one of His Messengers, “Whoever wants Us, We want him; and whoever wants from Us, We give to him; and whoever loves Us, We love him; and whoever is sufficed by Us more than everything that belongs to Us, We become available to him with all that belongs to Us.”

Whoever seeks Me, finds Me; whoever seeks other than Me, will not find Me. Whoever seeks Me returning in repentance (*tawbah*) finds Me through forgiveness; whoever seeks Me by thankfulness and gratitude for all the gifts, finds Me through the giving of more gifts; whoever invokes Me, finds Me through response; whoever seeks Me through reliance

(*tawakkul*), finds Me through sufficiency; whoever seeks Me through love, finds Me through direct connection and communication (*mawālah*); whoever seeks Me by yearning, finds Me through meeting (*liqāʾ*) and vision. Whoever remembers Allah, Allah remembers him; whoever is in love with Allah, Allah is in love with him; whoever seeks to please Allah, Allah pleases him; whoever seeks infallibility by Allah is guided to the straight path. The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) said, “Whoever loves to meet Allah, Allah loves to meet him; whoever hates to meet Allah, Allah hates to meet him.”

O Human Being! Who Are You?

Allah (*subḥānahu wa-ta ʿālā*) says, “When your Lord said to the angels, I shall place upon the earth a *khalīfah*,’ they said, ‘Will You place upon it [one] who will corrupt it and shed blood, [while] it is we who hymn Your praise and sanctify You?’ He said, ‘Truly I know what you know not.’ And He taught Adam the names – all of them, and then made them visible before the angels and said, ‘Tell Me the names of these if you are truthful.’ They said, Glory be to You. We have no knowledge other than what You have taught us. Truly You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.’ He said, ‘O Adam, tell them their names.’ And when he had told them their names, He said, ‘Did I not tell you that I alone know the unseen [Reality] of the heavens and the earth? And [that] I know what you reveal and what you conceal?’” [Q2:30-33].

The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) said, “Allah created Adam upon His own form.” (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim). Know, my beloved, that Allah created the human form and manifested it from separation (*farq*) to gathered-ness (*jamʿ*) in the presence.¹⁹

¹⁹ Sidi Shaykh Muḥammad Saʿid al-Jamal ar-Rifaʿi ash-Shadhuli. *How the Arrival is Realized O People of Hearts and Souls and Intellects*. pages 124-130.

Since the purpose of the cosmos is the Perfect Human (*'insān al-kāmil*), the human animal who resembles the perfect human being in his original nature [or natural configuration] is also found in the cosmos. The realities which Allah brought together by the human being were disseminated throughout the cosmos. The Real called to the realities across the cosmos and they came together. The human being came to be from their coming together, so he is the treasury in which the realities were united. So the faces of everything in the cosmos are directed toward the human treasury in order to see the manifestation of the Call of the Real through the integration of all the realities. These faces see the form standing erect, moving straight, and designated in directions. No one in the cosmos has seen the like of this human form.

From that moment on, all the spirits, from the most clay-like darkness to the spirit-like luminosity [*i.e.* the angels] have assumed the form of the human being. This is expressed in the words when He says, "Angel Jibril became imaginalized to her as a well-proportioned mortal" [Q19:17] and in the words expressed by the Messenger of Allah, "Sometimes the angels become imaginalized to me as a man." The spirits assume the shape only of the forms that they know, and they know nothing of them without witnessing. So before the creation of the human being, the spirits were assuming the forms of every form in the cosmos, except the human form. For even though spirits possess the ability to assume forms, in contrast to the human being, they do not possess the form-giving faculty, since it follows from reflection, which is an attribute of the reflective or imaginal faculty. Assuming forms is one of the attributes of the self of the spirits' essence – it does not belong to a form-giving faculty that they possess. So they assume only the forms of the natural world that they perceive.

The cosmos manifested from non-existence into *wujūd*, with the exception of human beings who were singled out to move from existence, to another existence, to another existence. [*i.e.* from an existence (*wujūd*) of separation to a *wujūd* of bringing together.] The essence of his existence does not change, just the state changes; the essence is from the

light of God. He manifests from a differentiated (*mufaṣṣal*) existence [the macrocosm], to an undifferentiated existence (*mujmal*), [the microcosm]. The human soul changed from a state of separation to a state of gathered-ness or bringing-together, while the cosmos changed from non-existence to existence. So the difference between the cosmos and the human being is the difference between non-existence and existence. This is why "Nothing of the cosmos is as the human being's likeness." [Q42:11].

Know that the meaning of perfection is that, except for the perfect man, the whole cosmos would not have come into existence. By the existence of the Perfect One, the purpose of the accidental cosmos was actualized by Allah. If the accidental cosmos manifests upon the image of the pre-eternal existence, then Allah is the Bringer into contingency, which is the Presence of the knowledge of pre-existence. This Presence cannot be [fully actualized] in any of His creation except in that reflected image, which is none but the Perfect Man. This is why he is named the perfect or complete human; he is the spirit of the cosmos, and both its loftiness and lowness are subjugated to him, and that includes the human animal.

The human animal resembles the perfect one in his outer appearance, but not in his inner being which is his rank, just as, the monkey resembles the animal human in most of its outer characteristics, [but he is different in rank]. Contemplate then the level of the human animal in comparison to that of the Perfect Man.

Know that you are what is meant by the Essence [of the cosmos], for the causes do not come to existence except by your cause, so that you may manifest *Its purpose*, and not so that the causes themselves may appear. This is because when Allah wanted to be known, there was no possibility for this knowledge to exist except through a mirror; and Allah did not bring anything reflecting His image into existence except the perfect human.

The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, "Many men have been perfected, but among women, only Mary and Āsiyah and

ʿĀʾisha.” By perfection he means, knowing themselves. Knowing your self is the essence of knowing your Lord. However, whoever stands on the threshold of the realities through unveiling and through Divine revelation, then he/she is the most perfect human, and whoever descends just below this level, he/she is the perfect human; and below this is the faithful believer, and the possessor of intellectual insight, but they have no perfection for the seekers. So human beings are distinguishable in many levels and stations, between the lowest in rank, (which is the human animal, even though he shares an outer resemblance with the perfect man), and the loftiest in rank, which is the shadow of Allah – the most perfect human who returns in repentance to the Real, and the Real becomes his tongue and all of his faculties.

During the time of the messengers, the Perfect Man was a messenger, but when the time of the message passed, the Perfect Man became the inheritor (*wāriṭh*) [of the praiseworthy qualities]. There was no appearance of an inheritor (*wāriṭh*) during the time of the Messenger because an inheritor (*wāriṭh*) can manifest only after the death of the one from whom he inherits. This is why the Companions [of the Messenger] did not reach this level at the time when the Messenger was still among them and not every soul is the perfect mirror of the Divine. This station is particular only to those complete and perfect souls of the prophets who are the most perfect among all humans.

Nonetheless, the Command has descended from the beginning, and will continue to descend until the end, but in the beginning, there was no one to receive and to accept it, except the particular messengers until their time had ended. Then that receptivity came to abide within others, besides the messengers, who accepted the Godly revelation within their hearts.

Know, my beloved, that everything an animal does is not out of contemplation, reflection, or planning, but from an instinct by which he has knowledge of how to act. Animals such as, spiders and bees, *etc.* do not know where these rules and conformity [with nature] come from. This is in contrast to the human who knows that he deduces a conclusion in any

matter by thinking, reflecting, contemplating, and planning. So he has full awareness of where his actions come from, whereas the rest of the animals do not know. It is by this decree that the human being is called human and no one else. This peculiar characteristic is common to all humans, but the perfect man exceeds the human animal by his ability to identify the Godly names; he received a share of the power of the names when the Real singled him out from the creatures of the world. He made the perfect human a vicegerent on behalf of the entire human species.

However, the human being tries to take the place of the perfect man by force. He fights for that which he cannot obtain except by Real action. There is a difference between the rulings concerning the perfect man, and those concerning the human man. Man is provided with provision, whereas, the perfect man has all of that and more. He has the Godly provision which the human being cannot gain [except by following the path]. This Godly provision feeds him with what [truly] nurtures him from the sciences of thought, revelation, tasting, and sound intellect, which the human [who does not travel the path to Allah] does not have.

So if a human being does not attain a level of perfection, he is an animal whose outer appearance resembles the human being. What is an animal in comparison to the human whom Allah created upon the form of the Universally Merciful? This perfect human is the perfect mirror and the preferred city of virtue.

Know that the universe is a great man (*insān kabīr*) in meaning, and it is the sanctuary (*al-haram*). Allah (*subhānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) says, "Surely the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of people, but most of the people do not know." [Q40:57]. This is why I said, "in meaning." Notice that Allah did not negate the knowledge from all humans; He said most people and not all people. The perfect man is from the macrocosm, and he is to the macrocosm like the spirit to the animal body, and the animal body is a small universe (*ʿālam ṣaḡhīr*). He is named "small" because, although he came to manifest the purpose of the eminent, he is the microcosm whereas the whole universe is the

macrocosm. The epitome (*mukhtaṣar*)²⁰ is the perfect man for he is the last existent in the cosmos and the epitome cannot come to this state except through the realities of temporally originated existence and eternal Being. Otherwise, epitome cannot be called epitome. The cosmos is the epitome of the Real and the human is the epitome of the cosmos. On the other hand, the Real is the purity of the most concise, by which I mean the perfect man. So, the human animal is the concise epitome, the small man of the cosmos, but the perfect man, the greatest man, is the greatest epitome. [So the perfect man came into existence upon the Form, but not the human animal, therefore, perfection belongs to the Form.]

Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) says, "O the two of you" [meaning mankind and *jinn*, or the two extremes that are outside the perfect Divine balance] "possessors of the heavy burden (*al-thaqalān*), We shall exhaust you until you are nothing." These are words of warning, but they are not directed to the perfect man.

Because the creation has these ontological (*wujūdī*) levels and because the perfect level in creation is the level of the human being, every species in the cosmos became part of the complete and perfect man, even the human animal is part of the perfect man.²¹

²⁰ The Arabic word *mukhtaṣar* literally means concise or brief. Refer also to the specific face on page 50 above.

²¹ As for the existence of terrestrial and material creations, which are manifested forms, know that they are levels and gradations in which the Divine spirit (*rūḥ*) finds a receptive locus or a means for revelation. And the entirety of this creation is nothing but the manifestation of the true being.

When the human being heard that he was created upon the form of the Universally Merciful, he made no distinction between the perfect man and the animal man, and he imagined that just by being human, he was a Divine Presence. But the truth is not as he thinks; being a human means having the potential to be a Divine Presence, and because he has been given this potential, he can receive it. Only then does he become a Divine Presence and one of the vicegerents. This is because the one who possesses this Divine Presence, does not act, but it is the Real's action. The action of the Real is the very essence of what the world is [within and without]. And you know what is in the world, and you know who is obliged and who is not, and who denies [the truth] and who knows [the Truth]. But the one who denies [the Truth] does not know. No one knows who is obligated except the vicegerent who possesses the Divine Presence.

If Allah has not created this Presence of Him, He would not have said, "Allah is the Greatest" because this word greatest implies comparison, and the word greatest is because He is the Origin. Following this guidance, the perfect one said, "The creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of people." This refers to those who have forgotten their Presence, and so the comparison is not in their favor because the heavens and the earth are the origin of the human form, and the cause of the existence of his expressive soul.

The heavens are the effective, and the earth is what is below, and the doer is greater than its effect.²² By heaven, He (*subḥānahū wa-ta 'ālā*) did not mean the cosmos, for He says, "But most people do not know." This is why all the praise with which Allah praised the perfect man is, in fact, praise of Himself, because He is the One Who brought him into existence as His Presence.

²² There is ultimately no existent being in reality save Allah, the One, the [only] effective Doer Who is alone in His being Singular. As for contingent beings and creations, their being is derivative and secondary, not essentially real, and is dependent on His active power.

Know that when He created the human as the Presence of Himself – the Exalted in Might, Honor, Pride and Glory – the rulings of these qualities flowed into the slave so that these rulings have demands on the human being as a Divine Presence. So the human is able to manifest leadership and excel to a degree by which he can have an influence on others; then he influences others and finds within himself the desire to influence others. Nonetheless, the people of [true] might are the ones through which the Divine Presence appears in the creation, and they do not become distracted from their poverty, humiliation, slavehood or servitude. Only when they see a need that demands them to manifest the Presence by which they were created, they manifest it in the particular manifestation which the Real specifies.

The rule of the Divine Presence demands that, in respect to his reality and subtle essence, man stands opposite the Godly names [through the relationship of incomparability]. So the two relationships, that of similarity and incomparability, turn their attentive care toward the creation of the human being more than toward any other creature, for He has made him vicegerent and has given him completion and perfection by the gnosis of the names. He created him as His Godly Presence, and he is the most perfect Godly Presence in existence.

So the perfect man, from the perspective of being the Godly Presence, is an opposite (*didd*), for it does not befit his station of slavehood and servitude to be Lord, nor to reflect otherwise. He is different in that the Truth becomes his hearing, his vision and all of his faculties. So, Allah affirms him and Himself in one essence. This is mentioned in Ḥadīth al-Qudsī, “I become the hearing by which he hears, the sight by which he sees, and the tongue by which he speaks.”

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The Perfect Man Brings Together the Godly and the Universal Presence

‘insān al-kāmil jāmi‘i sūratu-l-ḥaqq sūratu-l-‘ālam

Know, my beloved, that the cosmos is the Real's Presence, but the perfect man is both the universal presence and the Presence of the Real, and so he is the most perfect presence. This was expressed by the Messenger when he said, "Verily Allah created Adam upon His image." There is no possibility of a more beautiful or perfect cosmos than this cosmos because that would mean that there is another more perfect than Allah, Exalted is He. [So perfection is an intrinsic quality of everything.]

Adam is from the cosmos, and Allah created him in His Form and there is nothing more perfect than the Real's Form. The human is the outer appearance in which all realities of the cosmos are gathered, but the perfect man is one in which the realities of the cosmos and that of the Truth are brought together and, with that, the vicegerency becomes true. This was expressed by a gnostic who said, "It cannot be denied that Allah is Able to assemble the cosmos within one [being]," which is the perfect man who brings together the realities of the cosmos and the Presence of the Truth (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*).

There is nothing in the cosmos that does not have a share of the Godly Presence. The whole cosmos is the Godly Presence. The perfect man is the one who has gained both, not because he is part of the cosmos affected by the heavens and the earth in his physical formation, but, in spite of that, he is the Godly Presence in his spirit, just as is the whole cosmos, which was expressed by the Messenger of Allah when he said, "Verily Allah created Adam in His image." It is disputed as to whom the His refers. In a less authentic *ḥadīth*, it is narrated: "As the Presence of the Universally Merciful (*sūratu-l-raḥmān*)." Nonetheless, the presence of the cosmos is not completed except by human existence. [Without imperfection, existence's perfection could not be actualized.]

Everything in existence is in pairs; there are two sides or faces. [Allah says, “He is the One Who gives everything its form and function,” [Q20:50] and this is identical with the perfection of that thing, so it lacks nothing.] So there is (1) the perfect human being, and (2) the cosmos through the perfect human being, and both are in the form of the Real; both are the Real’s Presence. The Real is the actor and the cosmos is something He acts upon; it is the locus within which the reception of activity becomes manifest through the forms of the qualities that come upon it one after the other, such as unity and separation, *etc.* The perfect human is more distinguished than the cosmos, even though he is part of the complete presence of the whole cosmos. This distinction is because the perfect man is singled out as the Real’s Presence without the need of the cosmos. So the perfect man is one who sees the unity in the multiplicity. He is more perfect in the eye of the total cosmos because he is a replica of the cosmos, bit by bit. This Presence possesses perpetuity in bringing together and is not understood except as that, so it has no reason to be except to bring together and it separates only to bring together.

Allah says, “We will show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves until it is evident that He is the Truth.” [Q41:53]. Moreover, the perfect human is a reality that does not accept the contrast between the pairs; each attribute is found within the other.

“Allah created Adam in His image.” So the perfect human being contains both the universal presence and reflects the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*), and by this totality he is favored. The Real made the perfect man a replica of the entire cosmos, so there is no reality in the cosmos that is not within the human being. Man is therefore the Assembling Word and the Noble Epitome. All the Godly realities directed toward bringing the cosmos into existence were for the purpose of bringing into existence this foremost human form. So Allah created the human in the best mold and manifested him as a complete and perfect replica in which the pictures of all the realities of the contingencies are brought together, as well as the names of the Pre-Eternal. Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*) established him as the

meaning that connects both realities [the contingent and the eternal]. He originated him as a *barzakh* which brings together both endings and subtleties. The occasioned thing has no existence without the occasion, therefore, everything that comes into existence in an occasion has a face toward the occasion and a face toward Allah, and is therefore a *barzakh*. The subtlety of the human does not become manifest except at the proportioning and balancing of the body, [Q32:9], so he has a face toward nature and a face toward the Divine and is therefore a *barzakh*. With His hands He perfected His creation and beautified His painting with His attentive care.

The perfect man corresponds to the Godly names by his creation, and to the lofty and lowest worlds by his ethics; by this he is distinguished from all others. By the upright creation, Allah designates His secret as a similitude in the Presence of the secrets. He distinguishes his light among all other lights, and establishes a seat of care for him in the presence of duality. And He singles out the eye of protection, loyal allegiance, and vicegerency within him and for him. Unity becomes manifest in the parts and remains hidden in the totality; unity becomes manifest by two to infinity, but when one (*i.e.* unity) disappears from number, number disappears. The perfect human being is the greatest mercy – a mercy greater than the mercy of any other creature because he is the shadow of Allah on His earth.

The Real (*al-ḥaqq*) created the perfect man (*ʿinsān al-kāmil*) in His image (*sūrah*), and He made him the evidence of Himself for whomever wants to know, by direct witnessing (*shuhūd*), not by intellectualization, which is the way of seeing through the Signs in the horizon as expressed when He says, “We will show them Our Signs in the horizon.” But He does not stop by pointing only to that; He refers further to the perfect man who He establishes as evidence of knowing through direct revelation or unveiling (*kashf*) and witnessing (*mushāhadah*), by adding, “And in themselves.”

Because the human is the similitude (*mithal*) of the Godly presence (*sūrah*), he is the shadow of himself. The shadow never separates from

itself, but it sometimes appears to the senses, and sometimes hides from the senses. When it hides, it is intellectualized within the person, and when it appears, it is seen by the eye of whomever is looking. In the same manner, the perfect man is intellectualized within the Real as the shadow, and when it hides within the sun it does not appear. This is the perfect man from the beginning to the end, and there is no end. He is seen by the Real, for the Real is described with sight, and when He stretched the shadow from Himself, the perfect man appeared as His presence. "Have you not seen how your Lord stretches out the shadow? And if He willed, He could have made it stand still." [Q25:45]. The word *sākinā* means stand still or constant in the case of the one who is His shadow. This means that when Allah does not stretch the perfect man, no particular essence of him appears in the lower perception of existence except Allah Alone; so he [the perfect man] remains existent (*baqā'*) by the eternal existence of Allah, while everything else remains in existence, as long as Allah wills them to remain in existence.

This is why the people of vision say, "His saying: 'Have you not seen how your Lord stretches out the shadow?' [Q 25:45] suffices us." He mentions how and the shadow to imply that he does not appear except as a Divine presence from Whom he is stretched. So his creation is the mercy, for stretching the shadow guards the mercy, and there is no one greater in mercy than the perfect man. On the other hand, there is no one more severe in punishment and revenge than the human animal; and even though the perfect man can punish, his punishment contains mercy, whereas the punishment of the human animal is more severe.

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The Mark of the Perfect Man from Himself

Allah says, "You will know them by their mark." [Q2:273].

Know that you are ignorant of your reality as a the Divine Presence as long as you do not know the meaning of the Messenger's saying, "The faithful believer is a mirror to his companions." The faithful believer sees himself in the mirror that is his brother or sister, and his brother or sister sees himself or herself in him or her. And this is not true except in the presence of the Godly name, the Bestower of Faith (*al-mu'min*). Allah, Exalted is He, says, "They are your brothers in the *dīn*." [Q9:11]. So they have faith in Him, or rather, they know Him through every face and in every form. [see Q41:54]. And the Messenger (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*) said, "The faithful believer is a multiplicity by his brother" and he is one by his individual self (*nafs*). So he knows that the Godly names are like the faithful believers – they are brothers. Therefore "reconcile between your brothers and sisters." This means that if the names alienate each other – such as, the Exalter (*al-mu'izz*) and the Abaser (*al-mudhill*), or the Harmer (*aḍ-ḍārr*) and the Beneficial (*an-nāfi'*) – the rest of the names do not agree with each other and the brothers and sisters are not "on fine woven couches – reclining upon them face-to-face." [Q56:15-16]. There is no name which can reconcile between the names, except the name, the Lord (*al-rabb*). This name is the reconciling and the securing name from the perspective of his being a mirror. If any one sees this within himself, he knows that he is the vicegerent (*khalīfah*) by what he sees of the Divine presence.

The human animal has no mirror even though he has the form of a mirror because it is not polished or reflecting; rust has accumulated and appears on it. So the Real, Exalted is He, does not give any human animal any power to command or prohibit in this world, nor does He give any of them a vicegerency or the Form. But He gives all of this to the Perfect

Man. Anyone who wants to know his degree of perfection, let him look within himself to see if he has the ability to command and to prohibit, and to give or determine a shape or form without the intermediary of the tongue and without a limb or [the aid of] a creature, except himself – if he sees that he has this ability, then this meaning [of vicegerency] is true in him. In his perfection, he has the ability to shed light upon things and to clarify them from his Lord because he is a witness within himself. If he commands, prohibits, or begins to determine a form through the intermediary (*wāsita*) of one of his limbs, but nothing comes from this, or something does and something does not, you can still say that he is on the path to perfection because that which does not happen by his order through an intermediary does not show a decay in his perfection. For the Godly presence to appear in existence, Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ʿālā*) orders His people on the tongues of His messengers (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhim wa-salām*) and in His Books. Some of them obey and some of them rebel, but as the intermediaries are lifted, there is nothing but obedience, which is the special characteristic only of the perfect man, and not true for the animal human. [There is an example of this in Qurʾān [Q4:164]; Allah speaks directly to Mūsā by lifting the intermediaries.]

This reveals that the human animal and the perfect man share the ability to make something using their limbs, but the perfect man has more ability to act with aspiration (*himma*). A perfect human tool is aspiration and for the perfect man, it resembles the Divine Will. If that Will is directed to bringing something into existence, it is impossible for this thing not to be. This is why it was said that the creative similitude [or imagination (*khayāl*)] is the reality that is being expressed as the perfect man and it has been affirmed that the creative similitude is related to the power of bringing [the contingencies], except for himself, into existence by the Real. This is due to the fact that there is nothing reflecting the Truth like him, for within his perfect self, everything known exists except his ego-self (*nafs*). The relationship of existing beings to the Real is like the

relationship between the creative similitude and the perfect one who has mastery (*tamkīn*), realization and actualization (*taḥqīq*).

If the Real establishes you in absolute slavehood (*‘ubūdiyyah*) without lordship within it, then you are truly a vicegerent (*kḥālīfah*) for Him. This is because there is no rule for the one charged with a duty regarding the duty he is charged with. So the perfect one is the vicegerent and He charges him with the duty of slavehood without a share of lordship. This is because the vicegerent is independent [from the world] in the same manner in which the Divine Essence (*ḍḥat*) has independence [from the creation]. So he, [the perfect one], is in the hand of Allah, in the dominion of Allah, in His possession.

Know that, in the beginning, Allah created one of these kinds of perfect humans and this was Adam (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*). Then Allah provided clarification of the levels of perfection of all humans, so whoever gains it is the one I want, and whoever descends from this level has some degree of humanity remaining in him and he is not the perfect one. Nothing in the existing beings contains the Real, but the perfect one. And he does not contain Him except by his acceptance and receptivity of the Divine presence. He is the manifestation of the Real and the Real is the One who manifests the realities of the world by His spirit, which is the human being who is the last species that appeared in the cosmos. His beginning is the Real and his end is the Real. He is the first from the perspective that he is the Divine presence, and he is the last from the perspective of the Form (*i.e.* the body). He is the manifest with two presences and he is the hidden in the formed pictures by what he has of the Divine Presence.

This [secret] appeared through the ignorance of the angels of Adam's place, even though Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*) had informed them that Adam was the vicegerent. How would they have been if He had not informed them of this? Adam was hidden from the angels who are from the Highest World. They know what is in the Final World and have some knowledge of the beginning. If the angels had known what was in the

beginning, they would not have been ignorant of Adam's rank (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) even after Allah identified him as the vicegerent. [So the angel's knowledge and that of every existing thing comes from Allah giving them knowledge, not from knowing the self.]

The Perpetual Prostration of the Angels to the Perfect Man

The Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) said, "Heaven is bent down and it is true that it should bend, for there is not a span in it but has an angel prostrating to Allah." He informs that the angels prostrate to Allah to alert [the listener] that the sight of every angel in heaven is directed toward the earth, because prostration means bending down. So they bend down by Allah's command to the locus of that vicegerent. The prostration is because Allah commanded them to prostrate to him. The rule of prostration [and vicegerency] never ceases to be perpetual and endless – as it was for Adam in the beginning – to the perfect human in this world and the last world. In the High Assembly, there is overcrowding to see the perfect human, just as people form crowds, in this world, to a the king when he appears to them. So truly heaven is bent down!

Know that the perfect human knows the Real by his self/soul while the human animal knows Him by his intellect after he uses the instrument by which he can reflect. The angels did not know the perfect human through their objection: "Will You place upon it [one] who will corrupt it?" because they did not see all the human qualities. In the same way, the animal human does not know all the qualities of the perfect one by his intellect. So most people do not know the perfect human and therefore they do not know the Real. No one knows the Real except the perfect one. The Prophets described Him by what they witnessed and by what He sent down upon them because of the existence of perfection in their qualities,

which are the qualities of the Real. No one has this gnosis of Allah – neither the angels nor the intellects of the human beings. “Have you not seen how your Lord stretches out the shadow?” [Q25:45]. Allah has veiled everything, and has not revealed Himself except to the perfect man who is His stretched shadow, His definite throne, His quested house, and who is attributed with the perfection of existence. Nothing is more perfect than him because there is no perfect except the Real, Exalted is He.

The perfect man knows Allah by his intellect and his witnessing, and he brings together visual knowledge and intellectual contemplative knowledge. So whoever sees or knows the perfect man, who is the agent of the truth, knows the One Who put him in charge and made him the vicegerent because the perfect man appears as His Presence.

No one knows the true measure of the Real except one who knows the perfect man who Allah created as His presence. This presence is the vicegerency because the Real describes Himself through manifestation of the outer appearance with two hands, feet and eyes, and He simulates these in the contingent beings. “And they do not measure Allah with His true measure.” [Q6:91]. Indeed, His measure has been proven true. He relates everything to Himself, even that which evidence indicates should not be related to Allah. If a person does not follow the Divine Law, his limbs should not be related to Allah, but the Law applied on them should. And if a person intellectually relates these limbs to Allah, he is the one who has not measured Allah in accordance with His true measure, and what he says is wrong. But when a person relates these to Allah through the [Divine] Law and by witnessing, then he has evidential experience with His Lord, and he is one who estimates Allah in accordance to His true measure. The perfect man, who is the vicegerent, measures the Real outwardly and inwardly, and is His existing evidence in presence, meaning and place.

Every part of the cosmos knows Allah partially, except the human being. His gnosis of Allah is equated to knowledge of the whole cosmos. His gnosis is complete knowledge, but it is not knowledge of the *all* of

everything. Had it been knowledge of the *all* of everything, he would not have said, “O Allah! Increase me in knowledge.” Do you think knowing is possible without Allah? No, by Allah, knowing *is* by Allah. He created the perfect man as His Presence, and He gave him the mastery, by this Presence, to call Him by all the names – singularly and in groups. The names are not all called together as one word in order to distinguish the Lord from the perfect slave. There are none of the beautiful names – and all Allah’s names are beautiful – that cannot be attributed to the perfect slave in the same way that he calls his Master by them.

Because the gnostic has complete gnosis, he knows who seeks to witness his Lord and who seeks to know Him intellectually and through visions. It is his duty to give them their rights [by facilitating that knowledge for them]. He also knows that among them are those who seek delicious food to suit their mood, and he knows the one who is seeking sustenance, clothes, marriage and all the physical blessings. It is also his duty to give those people the rights, which the Real has assigned to them [by facilitating it in accordance to what is permissible in the Law]. This is because whoever is in this physical level has no means to renounce these existing things, and Allah created them because of their need to know what is His and what belongs to others.

Know, my beloved, that when Allah created the human, he created him a leader and gave him the Godly names, and made the angels prostrate to him, and made him a teacher to teach the angels who were ignorant of him. By him and within him, the existence of the whole cosmos was completed and perfected. He contains the two presences and gains the two positions – the place of honor by prostration, and the place of humbleness by knowing himself. As he continues to witness his Creator, no honor or might remains in him, and he returns to his original state of humility and poverty. Adam carried the trust (*amāna*) [Q33:72] when it was shown to him, and when what happened took place, [Q2:35-38; 2:117-122] he and his wife, who was part of him, said, “O Allah! We have oppressed ourselves!” This was because of carrying the trust.

It is narrated in the *hadith* that Allah planted the Tree of Beatitude (*tūbā*) [in Paradise] with His Hand, and that He created the Garden of Eden with His Hand. He only mentions a single hand; and He also mentions using a hand in creating everything, "What Our Hand has made," but when He describes the creation of Adam who is the perfect man, He mentions the two hands. [see: Q38:75]. There is no doubt that the duality is a *barzakh* between gatheredness (*al-jām'ī*) and separation. More accurately, it is the beginning of bringing together. Duality corresponds to [the number] two ending in an essence [*i.e.* an actor and the one acted upon]. It has a degree of perfection because what is separated cannot reach the gathered-ness except through separation. On the other hand, the gatheredness does not look at the separation except through gatheredness.

Therefore with the perfect human being, the complete and perfect Presence manifested. He is the heart of the cosmos' body, which consists of everything other than Allah. At the same time, the perfect human being is the Inhabited House that is inhabited by the Real, for he has contained Him as expressed in the narration of Ḥadīth al-Qudsī, "Neither My earth nor My heavens contain Me, but the heart of My faithful believer contains Me." So the place of the perfect human being is like the heart between Allah and the world!

Know that Allah did not create the human being in vain, but He created him to be *only* His Presence. Everything in the cosmos is ignorant of the whole, but has knowledge of the parts, except for the perfect human. Allah taught him *all* the names and gave him the eloquence of expression, especially speech, and by this His Presence was completed and perfected as he brought together the Presence of the Real and the cosmos. So he became the interval (*barzakh*) between this world and the first heaven of seven heavens, between the Real and the cosmos – an established mirror through which the Real sees His Presence. The creatures also see their presence in the mirror of the human being. Whoever attains this level, attains the rank of perfection, and there is no possibility that something could be more perfect.

The meaning of seeing the Presence of the Real within the perfect human being is that the perfect one is called by all the Godly names, as was narrated in the *ḥadīth*, “By them, [the perfect ones], you are granted triumph and Allah is the Granter of triumph; by them, you are provided and Allah is the Provider; by them, you are granted mercy and Allah is the Merciful.” It is also narrated in the Qur’ān, about the one whose perfection is known to us, the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*), who was described by Allah as, “Gentle and merciful with the faithful believers.” Allah (*subḥānahū wa-ta ‘ālā*) also describes him when He says, “And We have not sent you save as mercy to all the worlds.” [Q21:107]. Allah gave the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) the eloquence of speech; He perfected Adam with the names, but Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) He perfected with the eloquence of speech, and the eloquence of speech includes the names.

Know, my beloved, that the level of the perfect human being in relation to the cosmos is the same as the level of the rationally speaking soul (*an-naḥs al-nāṭiqah*) in relation to the human being. This is Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) who is the perfect one and there is no one more perfect than he (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*). The level of the perfect human beings who are [just] below the degree of this perfection, which is the furthest limit of the cosmos, corresponds to that of the spiritual faculties in the human being, and these are the prophets (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhim wa-salām*). The level of those in the cosmos who are lower in perfection than the degree of the prophets corresponds to that of the sensory faculties in the human being, and these are the inheritors [of the praiseworthy qualities], may Allah be pleased with them. Everyone else who has the form of the human being in appearance is one of the animals, and they correspond to the level of the animal spirit in the human being, which allows for growth and sensation.

Know also that, today, the cosmos has lost the all-comprehensiveness of Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu ‘alayhi wa-salām*) in his manifestation in spirit and body, form and meaning, so it is asleep, but not dead. The

cosmos' spirit, which is Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*), is, relative to the cosmos, the form of the locus where the human spirit dwells in sleep until the Day of Uprising, which is like the awakening of the sleeper here in this world.

We say, describing Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*), that he is the spirit, which is the rationally speaking soul of the cosmos, because of what unveiling has given. The form of the configuration [in perfect proportion and balance] of our Master, Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) manifests from it as it was configured before the existence (*wujūd*) of the animal body, by which life [in the cosmos] was given to him, which is his rationally speaking soul.

The cosmos is one of the people, since it is the human being in great size, and it has priority in proportioning and balancing, so the form of Muḥammad's configuration became manifest from it.²³ In the same way, God proportioned the body of the human being and then balanced [Q82:7] it before the *wujūd* of his spirit. Then of His spirit, He blew into him [Q32:9] a spirit whereby he became a complete human being and whereby God gave him his creation, which is his rationally speaking soul.

At the Resurrection, the whole cosmos will come to life through the manifestation of the perfected configuration of Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) fully equipped with faculties. So the cosmos is not complete except through the existence (*wujūd*) of the perfect human being who is its rationally speaking soul. In the same way, the configuration of the human being is a human being only through the rationally speaking soul. And this soul is not complete or perfect except through the divine

²³ Before the manifestation of Muḥammad's configuration, the cosmos was in the state of proportioning and balancing, like the embryo in its mother's womb. Its movement derived from the animal spirit within it, through which it was correct for it to have life. So polish your reflective faculty through what I have mentioned to you! -*Ibn al-Arabi*

form that was exemplified and described by the Messenger (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*). In the same way, the soul of the cosmos, who is Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu 'alayhi wa-salām*), achieves this degree of perfection through the completion of the divine form in the subsistence of the cosmos through him before Muḥammad's manifestation – this corresponds to the proportioned body; its state after his death corresponds to the sleeper, and its state through his uprising on the Day of Uprising corresponds to alertness and wakefulness after sleep.

The Meaning of al-Quṭb

The thing around which any affair circulates is the pivot [or axis] of the affair. There is nothing in existence that does not combine a spirit and a picture. So every pivot has a spirit and a picture. The spirits of the affair circulate around the spirit of its pivot, and the pictures of the affair circulate around the picture of its pivot. Similarly, there is a type of pivot that exists in the world of people. By this we refer to the second meaning of the existence of the cosmos and not by the first, for the first meaning [or purpose] of the existence of the cosmos is the worship of Allah, and by this, I mean the way of the worship of the gnostic. Gnosis is the completion of existence. Nonetheless, every species in the cosmos is complete, but not perfect; and the cosmos was not perfected except by the origination of the perfect human. Below the rank of the perfect human is the human animal named by its [distinguished yet] limited [characteristic], the talking or the expressive animal.

The Quṭb are the perfect human beings. Allah made the world of body and the world of form on two levels – the first level is the lower world and the second level is the final world, and He made its inhabitants both human and *jinn*. But the one considered here is the human, and the one considered from the human is the perfect one who combines all the states and stations, either by originality or by vicegerency. Sometimes

they expand with free reign, and when a station circulates around one of the perfect ones, he is singled out among the people of his nation during his time, and he is called the Quṭb. So the [spiritual] governor of a country is called the Quṭb of that country, and the *shaykh* of a group is called the Quṭb of that group.

It is necessary that in every village there is a Friend of Allah by whom Allah protects the village, whether the village consists of faithful believers or those who cover up the truth; that Friend is the Quṭb of that village.

This is similar in the case of the owners of stations. It is necessary for the abstainers, for example, to have a Quṭb around whom abstinence circulates during their time. This is the same with reliance (*tawakkul*), love (*maḥabbah*), gnosis (*maʿrifah*), and all the other qualities, stations and states. It is necessary for every quality to have a Quṭb around which this station circulates. So the Quṭb is the one around whom the managing of the hand-mill of the [Divine] rules circulates, affirming what is beneficial to the world, and is therefore supported by miracles and Signs.

Know that the one Quṭb who supplies all the prophets, the messengers, and all the designated pivots is the spirit of our Master Muḥammad (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) from the origin of humanity until the Day of Judgment. It was once said to the Messenger of Allah (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*), "Since when were you a Prophet?" He (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) answered, "Since Adam was between water and clay." So his name was made to heal wounds; he was an expert at healing all types of wounds, such as, the wound of falling in love, the wound of opinion, the wounds of the lower world, the wounds of satan, and the wounds of the soul. This healing also appeared on the tongue of every prophet. He (*ṣalla allāhu ʿalayhi wa-salām*) was an expert, and he even had insight about the location of the birth of his body in Makkah!

This praiseworthy spirit has manifestations in all the world. Its perfect manifestation is within the Quṭb of the era and within those singled out gnostics, and noble Friends, and within the Seal of the Praiseworthy Muḥammadan Friends, and the Seal of the Overwhelming Friends, who are the Guided One (al-Maḥdī) and his companion, ‘Īsā (‘*alayhim wa-salām*).

*Glory belongs to Allah, the Lord of Might and Honor,
free from all that they attribute to Him;
And peace be upon the Messengers,
and all praise to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.*

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